SHÍ'ISM

IMĀMATE & WILĀYAT

SAYYID MUHAMMAD RIZVI

Shi'ism: Imamate and Wilayat

by
Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

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Preface

In the name of Allãh, the Beneficent, the Merciful

O Allãh, send Your blessings upon Muhammad & his Progeny

This treatise deals with some fundamental issues of the Shí'a Islamic faith. Although not all the chapters were written at the same time, they are inter-related and connected by the theme of imãmate and *wilãyat* of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt. Chapter 2 was written in 1998, chapter 3 in 1990, chapter 4 in 1997, while the first and last three chapters have been written this year. While revising chapter 3, I have added the section 'The Meaning of *Mawla*' in order to complete the discussion on Ghadír Khumm.

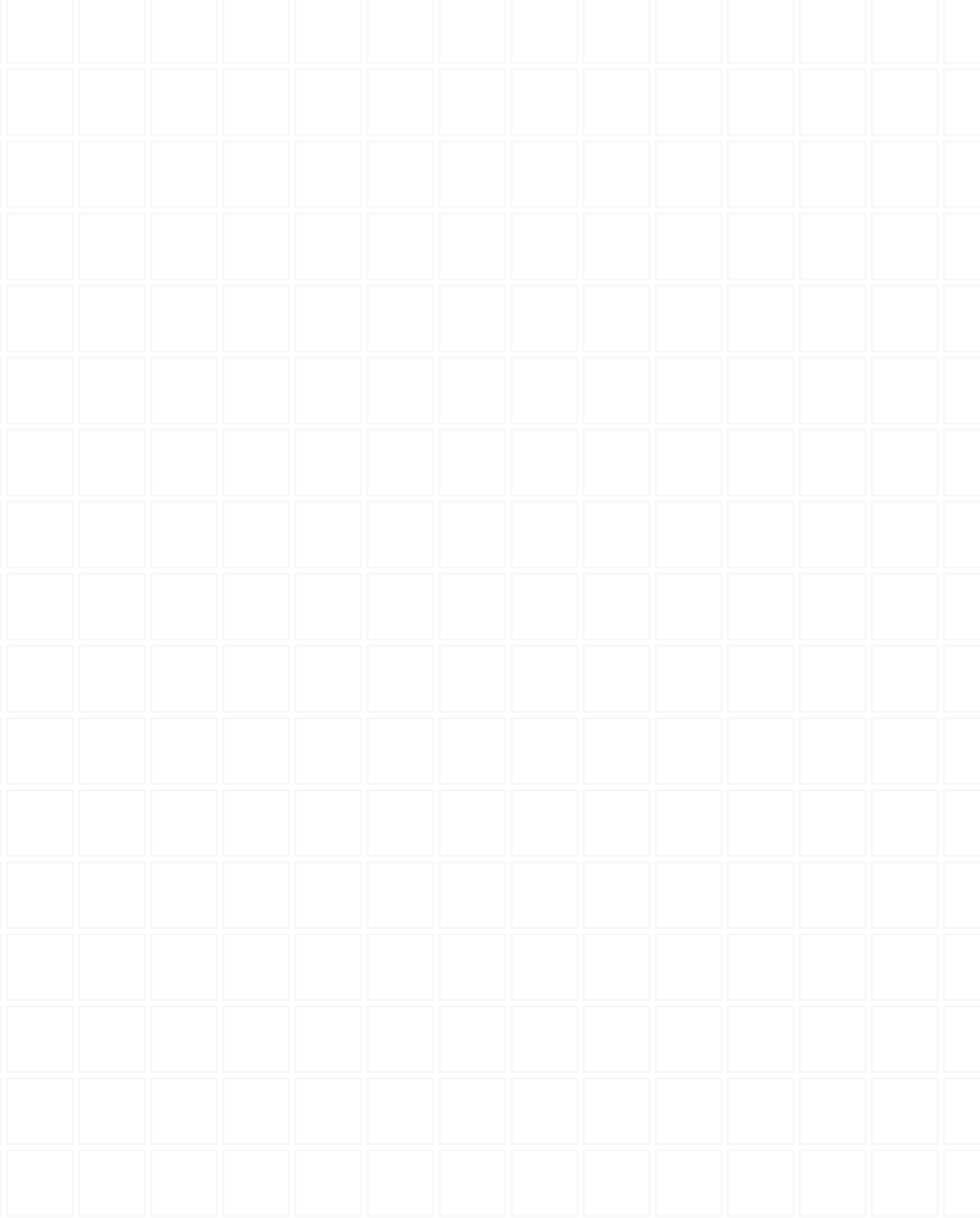
It is hoped that the reader will gain some insight into the Shí'a Islamic point of view on the most fundamental issue that has defined its existence in the past as well as in the present. This book also reflects some issues that are being discussed among some sections of the Shí'a community in North America. Such discussions and debates, at the least, provide the opportunity to further study and clarify the essential beliefs of Shí'a Islam.

May Allãh, *subhãnahu wa ta'ãla,* bestow upon us the ability to open our hearts to the Divine guidance, and may He lift the veils of academic arrogance and tribal solidarity from our hearts and minds when we see the truth. Amin.

Wa mã tawfíqí illa billãh.

Toronto Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

12 Rabi II 1420 / 26 July 1999

Chapter 1

Origin of Shí'ism: Political or Religious?

1. Introduction

In the polemical writings of the Sunnis, it is asserted that Sunni Islam is the "Orthodox Islam" whereas Shí'ism is a "heretical sect" that began with the purpose of subverting Islam from within. This idea is sometimes expressed by saying that Shí'ism began as a political movement and later on acquired religious emphasis.

This anti-Shí'a attitude is not limited to the writers of the past centuries, even some Sunni writers of the present century have the same views. Names like Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, Manzûr Ahmad Nu'mãni (both of India), Ihsãn Ilãhi Zahír (of Pakistan), Muhibbu 'd-Dín al-Khatíb and Musa Jãr Allãh (both from Middle East) come to mind. [1] It is not restricted to the circle of those that graduated from religious seminaries and had not been in touch with the so-called academic world. Ahmad Amin (of Egypt) and Fazlur Rahman (of Pakistan) fall in this category.

Ahmad Amin, for example, writes:

> "The truth is that Shí'ism is a refuge wherein which everyone who wishes to destroy Islam on account of enmity or envy takes shelter. As such, persons who wish to introduce into Islam the teachings of their Jewish, Christian or Zoroastrian ancestors achieve their nefarious ends under the shelter of this faith."[2]

Fazlur Rahman is an interesting case. After graduating from the Universities of Punjab and Oxford, and teaching at the Universities of Durham and McGill, he worked as the Director of the Central Institute of Islamic Research in Pakistan till 1968. He lost his position as the result of the controversy arising from his view of the Qur'ãn. Then he migrated to the United States and became Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Chicago. In his famous book, *Islam,* used as a textbook for undergraduate levels in Western universities, Dr. Fazlur Rahman presents the following interpretation about the origin of Shí'ism:

> "After 'Ali's assassination, the Shí'a (party) of 'Ali in Kufa demanded that Caliphate be restored to the house of the ill-fated Caliph. This legitimist claim on behalf of the 'Ali's descendants is the beginning of the Shí'a political doctrine...
>
> "This legitimism, i.e., the doctrine that headship of the Muslim Community

> rightfully belongs to 'Ali and his descendants, was the hallmark of the original Arab Shí'ism which was purely political...
>
> "Thus, we see that Shí'ism became, in the early history of Islam, a cover for different forces of social and political discontent...But with the shift from the Arab hands to those of non-Arab origin, the original political motivation developed into a religious sect with its own dogma as its theological postulate... Upon this were engrafted old oriental beliefs about Divine light and the new metaphysical setting for this belief was provided by Christian Gnostic Neoplatonic ideas."[3]

He further comments: "This led to the formation of secret sects, and just as Shí'ism served the purposes of the politically ousted, so under its cloak the spiritually displaced began to introduce their old ideas into Islam."[4]

It is in this background that I find it extremely difficult to understand how a learned scholar, from Shí'í background, could echo somewhat similar ideas about the origin of Shí'ism by writing:

> "Most of these early discussions on the Imamate took at first sight political form, but eventually the debate encompassed the religious implications of salvation. This is true of all Islamic concepts, since Islam as a religious phenomenon was subsequent to Islam as a political reality."[5]
>
> "From the early days of the civil war in A.D. 656, some Muslims not only thought about the question of leadership in political terms, but also laid religious emphasis on it."[6]

Referring to the support of shi'a of Kufa for the claim of leaders for 'Alids, the learned author writes:

> "This support for the leadership of the 'Alids, at least in the beginning, did not imply any religious underpinning...The claim of leadership of the 'Alids became an exaggerated belief expressed in pious terms of the traditions attributed to the Prophet, and only gradually became part of the cardinal doctrine of the Imamate, the pivot on which the complete Shí'ite creed rotates."[7]

After explaining the failures and the martyrdom of the religious leaders who rose against the authorities, he writes:

> "This marked the beginnings of the development of a religious emphasis in the

role of the 'Alid Imams..."[8]

2. The Beginning of Islam

The Sunnis as well as the Shí'as believe that Islam is primarily a religion whose teachings are not limited to the spiritual realm of human life but also encompass the political aspect of society. Inclusion of political ideals in the religion of Islam does not mean that Islam started or was basically a political movement. Look at the life of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). The Prophet's mission began in Mecca. There is nothing in the pre-*hijra* program of the Prophet that looks similar to a political movement. It was primarily and fundamentally a religious movement.

Only after the *hijra,* when the majority of the people of Medina accepted Islam, the opportunity for implementation of Islamic social order arose and so Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) also assumed the position of the political leader of the society. He signed agreements with other tribes, sent ambassadors to kings and emperors, organized armies and led Muslim forces, sat in judgement, appointed governors, deputees, commanders, and judges, and he also collected and distributed taxes. Nonetheless, Islam was first a religious movement that later on encompassed political aspects of society. So to say that "Islam as a religious phenomenon was subsequent to Islam as a political reality" is historically an incorrect statement.

3. The Origin of Shí'ism

The origin of Shí'ism is not separate from the origin of Islam since the Prophet himself sowed its seed by proclaiming the *wisãya* (successorship) and *khilãfat* (caliphate) of 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib in the first open call to Islam that he made in Mecca.

Islam began when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) became forty years old. Initially, the mission was kept a secret. Then three years after the advent of Islam, the Prophet was ordered to commence the open declaration of his message. This was the occasion when Almighty Allãh revealed the verse "*And warn thy nearest relations."* (The Qur'ãn 26:214)

When this verse was revealed, the Prophet organized a feast that is known in history as "Summoning the Family - *Da'wat dhu 'l-'Ashira*". The Prophet invited about forty men from the Banu Hãshim and asked 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib to make arrangements for the dinner. After having served his guests with food and drinks, but the Prophet wanted to speak to them about Islam, Abu Lahab forestalled him and said, "Your host has long since bewitched you." All the guests dispersed before the Prophet could present his message to them.

The Prophet then invited them the next day. After the feast, he spoke to them, saying:

> O Sons of 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib! By Allãh, I do not know of any person among the Arabs who has come to his people with better than what I have brought to you. I have brought to you the good of this world and the next, and I have been commanded by the Lord to call you unto Him. Therefore, who amongst you will support me in this matter so that he may be my brother (*akhhí*), my successor (*wasiyyí*) and my caliph (*khalifatí*) among you?

This was the first time that the Prophet openly and publicly called the relations to accept him as the Messenger and Prophet of Allãh; he also uses the words "*akhí wa wasiyyí wa khalífatí*- my brother, my successor, my caliph" for the person who will aid him in this mission. No one answered him; they all held back except the youngest of them - 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib. He stood up and said, "I will be your helper, O Prophet of God."

The Prophet put his hand on the back of 'Ali's neck and said:

> "*Inna hadhã akhhí wa wasiyyí wa khalífatí fíkum, fasma'û lahu wa atí'û* - Verily this is my brother, my successor, and my caliph amongst you; therefore, listen to him and obey."[9]

This was the first explicit statement because the audience understood the appointment of 'Ali very clearly. Some of them, including Abu Lahab, even joked with Abu Tãlib that your nephew, Muhammad, has ordered you to listen to your son and obey him! At the least, this shows that the appointment of 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib was clear and explicit, not just implied.

After that, the Prophet at various places emphasized the issue of loving his Ahlul Bayt, seeking guidance from them, and drew the attention of the people to the special status that they had in the eyes of God and His Messenger.

Finally, just two months before his death, the Prophet clearly appointed 'Ali in Ghadir Khumm as the leader (religious as well as political) of the Muslims. He said, "Whomsoever's Master I am, this 'Ali is his Master." He also said, "I am leaving two precious things behind, as long as you hold on to them both you will never go astray: the Book of Allãh and my progeny."[10]

A lot has been discussed and written on these events. The reader may refer to the following works in English:

- *A Study on the Question of Al-Wilaya* by Sayyid Muhammad Bãqir as-Sadr,

translated by Dr. P. Haseltine. (This treatise was first translated in India under the appropriate title: *"Shí'ism: the Natural Product of Islam"*.)

- *The Origin of Shí'a and Its Principles* by Muhammad Husayn Kãshiful Ghitã'.
- *Imamate: the Vicegerency of the Prophet* by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.
- *Origins and Early Development of Shí'a* Islam by S. Hussain M. Jafri.
- *The Right Path* by Syed 'Abdulhussein Sharafuddin al-Musawi.
- "The Meaning & Origin of Shí'ism" by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi in *The Right Path,* vol.1 (Jan-Mar 1993) # 3.[11]

Anyone who reads these materials will see that the beginning of Islam and Shí'ism was at the same time and that, just like Islam, Shí'ism was a religious movement that also encompassed social and political aspects of society. As Dr. Jafri writes,

> "When we analyse different possible relations which the religious beliefs and the political constitution in Islam bear to one another, we find the claims and the doctrinal trends of the supporters of 'Ali more inclined towards the religious aspects than the political ones; thus it seems paradoxical that the party whose claims were based chiefly on spiritual and religious considerations, as we shall examine in detail presently, should be traditionally labelled as political in origin."[12]

It is indeed unthinkable that the famous companions of the Prophet like Salmãn al-Fãrsi and Abu Dharr al-Ghifãri thought of 'Ali primarily as a political leader, and only later on started thinking of him as a religious leader also.

In his academic work, *Islamic Messianism,* the learned scholar counts the civil war as the beginning of "religious Shí'ism": "From the early days of the civil war in A.D. 656, some Muslims not only thought about the question of leadership in political terms, but also laid religious emphasis on it."[13] But in his article that was presented in a community gathering and published by one of the religious centers, he places the beginning of Shí'ism from the time of Ghadir Khumm. He writes, "The proclamation by the Prophet on that occasion gave rise to the tension between the ideal leadership promoted through the *wilaya* of Ali ibn Abi Talib and the real one precipitated by human forces to suppress the purposes of Allãh on earth."[14]

This dichotomy between "the academician" and "the believer" is indeed disturbing. May Almighty Allãh grant all workers of the faith the confidence to stand for their faith in all gatherings, of insiders as well as outsiders *(fis sirri wa 'l-'alãniyya)*.

4. The Name "Shí'a"

A follower of Islam is known as "Muslim" whereas a Muslim who believes in Imam 'Ali

as the immediate successor and caliph of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is known as "Shí'a". The term "Shí'a" is a short form of *Shí'atu 'Ali* - follower of 'Ali".

Muslims take great pride in being affiliated to Prophet Ibrãhím (a.s.), and rightly so. It is also a known fact among Muslims that Prophet Ibrãhím was himself named as a "Muslim" by Almighty Allãh.

"Ibrãhim was neither a Jew nor a Christian but he was a sincere 'Muslim' (one who submits to Allãh), and he was not one of the polytheists." (3:67)

What the people do not notice is that Almighty Allãh has named Prophet Ibrãhím as a "Shí'a" also; of course, not "Shí'a of 'Ali" but "Shí'a of Nûh". He says:

"Peace and salutation be to Nûh in the worlds...and most surely among his followers ('shí'a') is Ibrãhím..." (37:79-83)

So those who call themselves as "Muslims" and "Shí'as" are actually following the tradition established by Almighty Allãh in being called as "followers" of pious believers just as Prophet Ibrãhím has been described as a follower of Prophet Nûh.

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Notes:

[1] These writers represent the Salafi/Wahhãbi camp, and their anti-Shí'a works have been distributed world-wide with the courtesy of the petro-dollars of certain Middle-Eastern countries, especially after the Sunni masses started getting inspiration by the revolution of Iran which was led by Shí'a 'ulamã'.

[2] Fajru 'l-Islãm, p. 33 as quoted and then refuted by Muhammad Husayn Kãshiful 'l-Ghitã', Aslu 'sh-Shí'a wa Usûluhã (Qum: Mu'assasa al-Imam 'Ali, 1415) p. 140, 142; also see the latter's English translation, The Shí'a Origin and Faith (Karachi: Islamic Seminary, 1982).

[3] Fazlur Rahman, Islam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 171-172.

[4] Ibid, p. 173.

[5] Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina, Islamic Messianism: The Idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shí'ism (Albany: State University of New York, 1981) p. 4. Dr. Sachedina studied at the Universities of Aligarh (India), Mashhad (Iran) and Toronto. Islamic

Messianism is a revised version of his doctoral thesis presented to the University of Toronto in 1976.

[6] Ibid, p. 5.

[7] Ibid, p. 6.

[8] Ibid, p. 18.

[9] For references of this event and discussion on this event, see the chapter "Self-Censorship in Muslim History".

[10] For further discussion on the event of Ghadír Khumm, see the chapter "Ghadír Khumm & the Orientalists" below. For authenticity of this version of the hadíth (that is, "Book of Allãh and my progeny" as opposed to "Book of Allãh and my sunnah"), see the Sunni author, Hasan bin 'Ali as-Saqqãf, "The Book of Allãh and What Else?" The Right Path, vol. 6 (# 3 & 4 Oct-Dec 1997) p. 44-49.

[11] To this list we may also add The Succession to Muhammad by Wilferd Madelung published in 1997. This is the first study by a Western scholar of high stature who acknowledges that the caliphate of Abu Bakr was not unanimous, and that it was challenged by 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib and his followers. This is a new breakthrough in Western/non-Muslim scholarship which till now stated as a matter of fact that the Shí'a-Sunni dispute started only after the civil war, that is after the murder of 'Uthmãn bin 'Affãn and during the battle between Imam 'Ali and Mu'ãwiya.

[12] S. Hussain M. Jafri, Origins and Early Development of Shí'a Islam (London: Longmans, 1979) p. 2.

[13] Islamic Messianism, p. 5.

[14] Sachedina, "Wilaya of Imam Ali and its Theological-Juridical Implications for the Islamic Political Thought" in Ghadir (Toronto: Islamic Shí'a Ithna-'Asheri Jamaat & NASIMCO, 1990) p. 54.

Self-Censorship in Muslim History

A case study of *Da'wat dhu 'l-'Ashira*

1. Introduction

Many students of Islamic history begin with the assumption that if an event or a statement has not been reported in the earliest sources of Muslim history or hadith like *as-Sirah an-Nabawiyya* of Ibn Hishãm or *Sahíh* of al-Bukhãri, it must be a later fabrication and therefore not credible. They tend to ignore the biases and limitations that are imposed on the writer by the ruling powers as well as by self-inclination. Biases are not only relevant in fabrication of mythical persons, events and statements, they are equally relevant in ignoring and silently bypassing certain historical figures and stories.

This paper intends to examine the way Muslim historians have dealt with the first open call to Islam known as Da'wat dhu 'l-'Ashira.

2. The First Open Call to Islam

Islam began when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) became forty years old. Initially, the mission was kept a secret. Then three years after the advent of Islam, the Prophet was ordered to commence the open declaration of his message. This was the occasion when Almighty Allãh revealed the verse *"And warn thy nearest relations."* (26:214)

When this verse was revealed, the Prophet organized a feast that is known in history as "Summoning the Family - *Da'wat dhu 'l-'Ashira*". The Prophet invited around forty men from the Banu Hãshim and asked 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib to make arrangements for the dinner. After having served his guests with food and drinks, when the Prophet wanted to speak to them about Islam, Abu Lahab forestalled him and said, "Your host has long since bewitched you." All the guests dispersed before the Prophet could present his message to them.

The Prophet then invited them the next day. After the feast, he spoke to them, saying:

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> support me in this matter so that he may be my brother *(akhhí),* my successor *(wasiyyí)* and my caliph *(khalifatí)* among you?

This was the first time that the Prophet openly and publicly called the relations to accept him as the Messenger and Prophet of Allãh; he also uses the words "*akhí wa wasiyyí wa khalífatí*- my brother, my successor, my caliph" for the person who will aid him in this mission. No one answered him; they all held back except the youngest of them - 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib. He stood up and said, "I will be your helper, O Prophet of God."

The Prophet put his hand on the back of 'Ali's neck and said:

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This was a very explicit statement because the audience understood the appointment of 'Ali very clearly. Some of them, including Abu Lahab, even joked with Abu Tãlib that your nephew, Muhammad, has ordered you to listen to your son and obey him! At the least, this shows that the appointment of 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib was clear and explicit, not just implied.

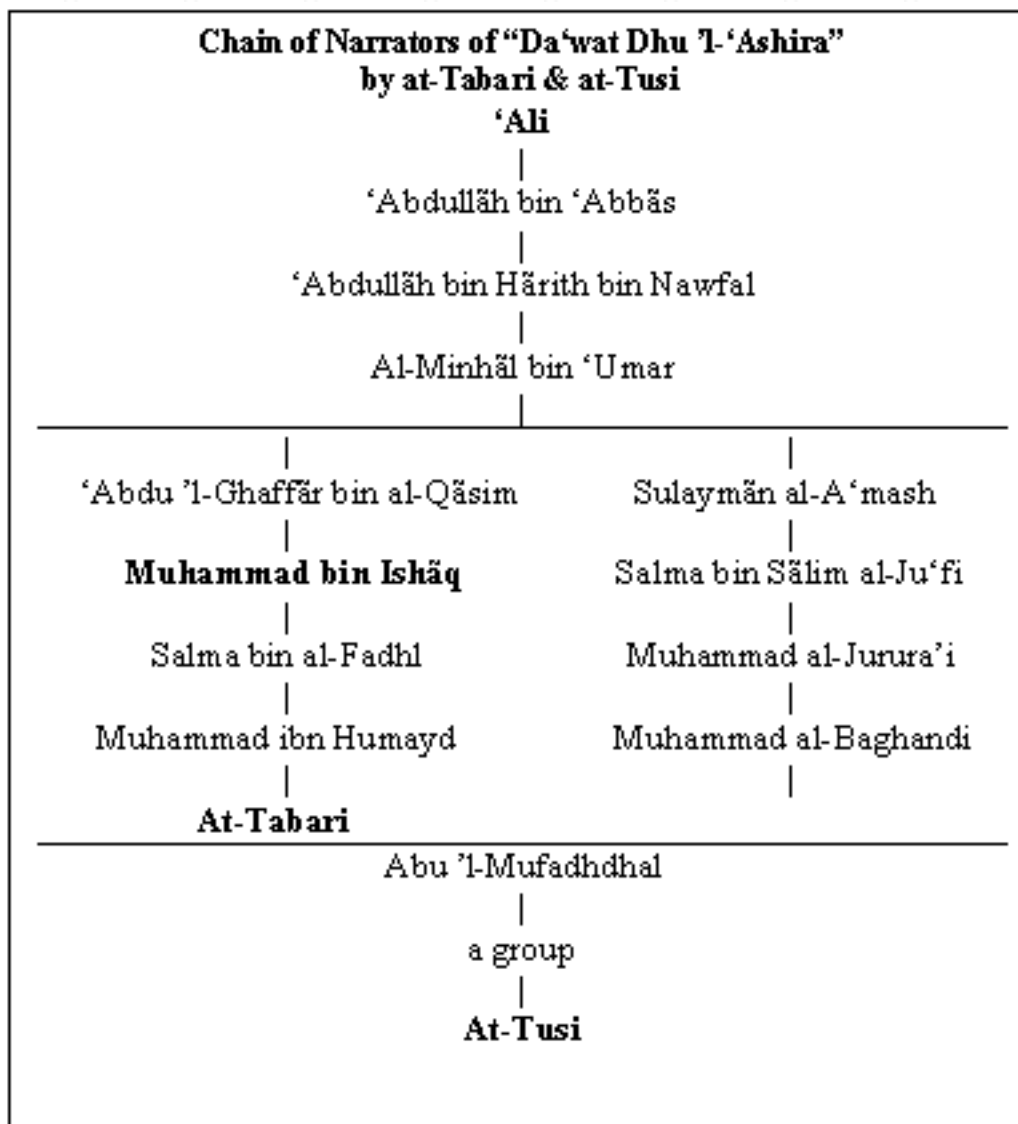
3. Why Doesn't Ibn Hishãm Mention this Da'wat?

One of the questions raised in relation to this issue is why 'Abdu 'l-Malik Ibn Hishãm (d. 213 AH) does not mention this event in his *as-Sirah an-Nabawiyya* - The Biography of the Prophet? After all, he is the earliest of all historians.

What is known as the *Sirah* of Ibn Hishãm is actually the summary of the book of Muhammad Ibn Ishãq (born in 85 AH in Medina and died in 151 AH in Baghdad). The unabriged version of Ibn Ishãq's history book does not exist anymore. So the question has to be reformulated: "Did Ibn Ishãq mention the Summoning of the Family event?"

The political considerations that influenced Ibn Hishãm in deleting certain events and maintaining others is clear from his own statement. While listing the items that he has omitted, Ibn Hishãm writes, "...things which it is disgraceful to discuss; matters which would distress certain people...all these things I have omitted."[16] Editors of the 1955 Egyptian edition of the *Sirah* write that Ibn Ishãq had quoted events that would not have pleased the 'Abbãsids "like the participation of al-'Abbãs with the infidels in the battle of Badr and his capture by the Muslims-the narration that Ibn Hishãm later on omitted out of the fear of the 'Abbãsids."[17]

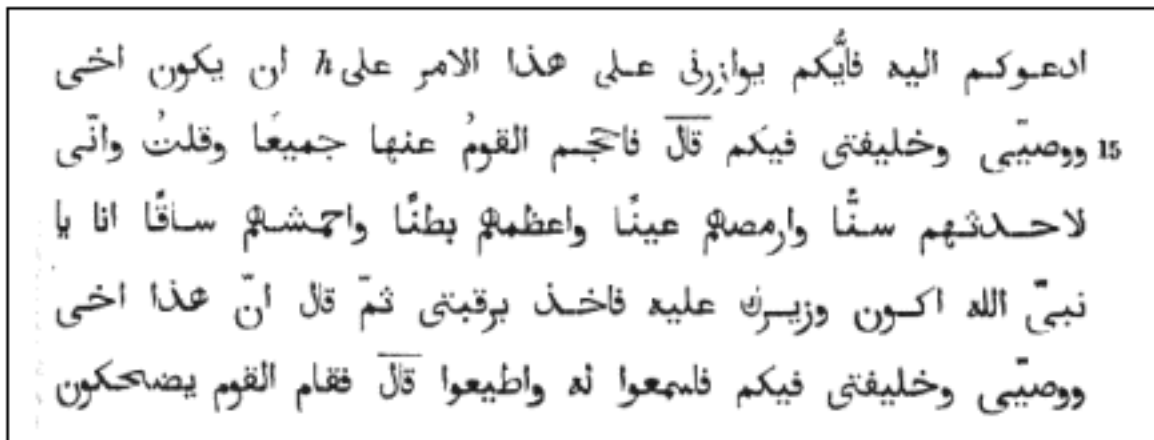
Praises of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib, especially the traditon of *dãr,* were among the items that Ibn Hishãm has deleted in summarizing the *Sirah* of Ibn Ishãq. "The tradition of *dãr*" is about the Summoning of the Family event mentioned above.

The fact that Ibn Ishãq had mentioned the Summoning of the Family can be seen through those who have narrated events from Ibn Ishãq by sources other than Ibn Hishãm. For example, at-Tabari (d. 310 AH) narrates the same event through Ibn Ishãq. Shaykh Abu Ja'far at-Tûsi (d. 460 AH) also narrates the same event through two different chains of narrators: one of those two is on the authority of Ibn Ishãq through at-Tabari.[18]

This clearly shows that what has come to be recognized as the earliest and the most authentic historical account is not free from bias in ignoring certain events and in narrating others.

Ibn Ishãq himself has been accused of having Shí'ite leanings. If true, this could be one of the considerations that prompted Ibn Hishãm to omit the items that he thought supported the Shí'ite cause. However, al-Khatíb al-Baghdãdi in *Ta'ríkh Baghdãd* and Ibn Sayyidi 'n-Nãs in *'Uyûnu 'l-Athar,* both Sunni historians, have defended Ibn Ishãq against all kinds of accusations including that of having Shí'ite leanings.[19]

4. Self-Censorship by At-Tabari

The case of Muhammad bin Jarír at-Tabari (d. 310 AH) is even more interesting. The event of Da'wat dhi 'l-'Ashira given above is based on the version of at-Tabari's monumental work in history: *Ta'ríkhu 'l-Umam wa 'l-Mulûk.* At-Tabari has also authored a famous commentary of the Qur'ãn: *Jãmi'u 'l-Bayãn 'an Ta'wíl Ãyai 'l-Qur'ãn.* It is interesting to compare the history of at-Tabari with his Qur'ãnic commentary in relation to the present topic.

ادعوكم اليه فأيكم يوازرني على هذا الامر على ان يكون اخي
15 ووصيي وخليفتي فيكم قال فاحجم القوم عنها جميعا وقلت واني
لاحدثهم سنا وارمصهم عينا واعظمهم بطنا واحمشهم ساقا انا يا
نبي الله اكون وزيرك عليه فاخذ برقبتي ثم قال ان هذا اخي
ووصيي وخليفتي فيكم فاسمعوا له واطيعوا قال فقام القوم يضحكون

Tabari's *Ta'rikh,* vol. 3 (1879 edition) p. 1173.

In his *Ta'ríkh,* at-Tabari has quoted the words used by the Prophet for 'Ali in the Feast in its entirety:

"*akhhí wa wasiyyí wa khalífatí:*

my brother, my successor, my caliph."[20]

But in his *at-Ta'wíl* (vol. 19, p. 74), while discussing the relevant verse in which the Prophet was ordered to call his relations to Islam, at-Tabari exercises self-censorship and has concealed the clear and the explicit impact of the Prophet's words by recording it as follows:

"akhhi wa kadha wa kadha:

my brother, and so-and-so, and so-and-so."

Ibn Kathír, another famous Damascene author of *al-Bidãyah wa an-Nihãyah* (vol. 3, p. 40), has used the *Ta'ríkh* of at-Tabari as his main reference. However, when he comes to the event of the Feast, he abandons the *Ta'ríkh* of at-Tabari and uses the altered version of *Jãmi'u 'l-Bayãn* of at-Tabari! This is not surprising since it is known that Ibn Kathír had anti-Shí'a sentiments.

5. Self-Censorship In Modern Times

A modern writer of Egypt, Dr. Muhammad Husayn Haykal, wrote a famous book on the Prophet's biography known as *Hayãt Muhammad*. Haykal had first published the Prophet's biography in his weekly paper *as-Siyãsa.* The event of the Feast was published in the supplement of issue # 2751 (12 Dhu 'l-Qa'dah 1350) p. 5, column 2. One of his critics wrote a letter to the paper accusing Haykal of using Shí'ite sources for that statement about Imam 'Ali. Haykal responds to this accusation in the supplement of issue # 2758, p. 6, column 4, by denying that he used a Shí'ite source "since all traditions do speak of this behaviour of 'Ali;" and quotes the *hadith* from *Sahíh* of Muslim, *Musnad* of Ahmad and others.[21]

Haykal resisted the pressure to omit the Prophet's statement about 'Ali when the biography was finally printed in a book form. In the first edition of *Hayãt Muhammad*, Haykal narrates the event of the Feast as follows:

> "...When they had finished eating, he [the Prophet] said to them, 'I do not know any person among the Arabs who has come to his people with something better than what I have come to you; I have come to you with the best of this world and the hereafter. My Lord has ordered me to call you unto him.
>
> "'So who among you will help me in this matter, so that he may be my brother, my successor, and my caliph among you?'
>
> "All of them turned away from him and wanted to leave him but 'Alí stood up although he was still a child who had not reached maturity and said, 'O Messenger of Allãh, I shall be your helper! I will help you against whomsoever you fight.' The Banu Hãshim smiled, some of them laughed, and their eyes moved from Abu Tãlib to his son; and then they left in the state of ridicule."[22]

القوم ليقوموا . ودعاهم محمد فى الغداة كرة أخرى؛ فلما طعموا قال لهم : ما أعلم
إنساناً فى العرب جاء قومه بأفضل مما جئتكم به . قد جئتكم بخير الدنيا والآخرة .
وقد أمرنى ربى أن أدعوكم إليه . فأيكم يؤازرنى على هذا الأمر وأن يكون
أخى ووصيّ وخليفتى فيكم ؟ فأعرضوا عنه وهمّوا بتركه . لكن عليًّا نهض
وما يزال صبيًّا دون الحلم وقال : « أنا يا رسول الله عونك ، أنا حرب على من
حاربت » . فابتسم بنو هاشم وقهقه بعضهم . وجعل نظرهم يتنقل من أبى طالب
إلى ابنه ، ثم انصرفوا مستهزئين .

Haykal's *Hayāt Muhammad*, 1st edition, p. 104

Haykal has quoted the important words in the initial statement of the Prophet asking for support; but conveniently left out the Prophet's entire response to 'Ali's readiness to help him!

In the second edition, Haykal seems to have given into the pressure of the bigots and even deleted the crucial words of the Prophet and just wrote: "...he said to them, '... So who among you will help me in this matter? All of them turned away from him..."[23]

١٤٠ حياة محمد

ليقوموا . ودعاهم محمد فى الغداة كرّة أخرى . فلما طعموا قال لهم : ما أعلم إنسانا
فى العرب جاء قومه بأفضل مما جئتكم به ؟ قد جئتكم بخير الدنيا والآخرة . وقد
أمرنى ربى أن أدعوكم اليه . فأيكم يؤازرنى على هذا الأمر؟ فأعرضوا عنه وهمّوا
بتركه . لكن علياً نهض، وهو ما يزال صبيا دون الحلم، وقال : " أنا يارسول الله
عونُك ، أنا حربٌ على من حاربتَ " . فابتسم بنو هاشم وقهقه بعضهم ، وجعل
نظرهم يتنقل من أبى طالب الى ابنه، ثم انصرفوا مستهزئين .

Haykal's *Hayāt Muhammad*, 2nd edition, p. 140.

This clearly shows that he doesn't doubt the actual "Summoning of the Family" event but he lacked the intellectual courage to stand by the logical conclusion of his initial

findings in the study of history.

6. The **Isnãd** *of "Summoning the Family"*

The opponents of the Shí'a view naturally have tried to question the credibility of some of the narrators of this famous event.

Ibn Taymiyya, well known for his anti-Shí'a sentiments, has adamantly declared it to be a fabricated *hadíth.* He has attacked the credibility of 'Abd al-Ghaffãr bin al-Qãsim known as Abu Maryam al-Kufi.[24] Abu Maryam is the source of Ibn Ishãq in narrating the event of "Summoning the Family". However, the only basis for questioning the credibility of Abu Maryam is his Shi'a links; but, as any unbiased person knows, that is not a sufficient ground to reject his narration. Shi'a biographers of narrators have counted him among the reliable narrators of hadíth from the fourth, fifth, and sixth Shi'a Imams (a.s.).[25]

Salma bin al-Fadhl (d. 191), the foremost disciple of Ibn Ishãq, is also recognized as credible in narrating the Prophet's biography from his master. He is quoted as saying, "I have heard the *al-Maghãzi* from Ibn Ishãq two times;" and he is well known among the scholars of *hadith* for historical narration from Ibn Ishãq.[26] According to Mutã' at-Tarãbíshí, Salma bin al-Fadhl's narration of historical nature are accepted by all.[27] Ibn Mu'ín says, "Salma [bin al-Fadhl] al-Abrash ar-Rãzi was a Shí'i as already written and there is no defect in him... Abu Zuhra says, 'The people of Ray did not like him because of his undesirable [i.e., Shi'í] beliefs.'"[28] Adh-Dhahabi writes the following about Salma: "He was steadfast in prayer and full of humility in his beliefs; he died in 191 A.H."[29]

Shaykh Salím al-Bishri had raised the issue why al-Bukhãri and Muslim do not mention this tradition in their *Sahíhs*. Sharafu 'd-Dín al-Musawi responded as follows:

"The tradition conflicts with the views of the two Shaykhs, Bukhari and Muslim, in respect of the Caliphate and that is why they have not recorded it in their *Sahíhs*. They have also scrupulously avoided recording a number of other genuine traditions which stipulated the Caliphate in favor of Amir al-Mu'minín lest the same serve as a weapon in the hands of the Shí'as, and so intentionally concealed the truth. Not only Bukhari and Muslim but also many other Shaykhs (i.e., senior traditionists) among the Ahl al-Sunnah followed this practice...They used to conceal everything of this nature and are well known for their creed of concealment of facts (favoring 'Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt). Hafiz Ibn Hajar has related this from them in *Fath al-Bãri*...

"Anyone who knows the behaviour of Bukhari towards Amir al-Mu'minín and other members of the Ahl al-Bayt also knows that his pen invariably omits mentioning the

clear traditions of the Holy Prophet in their favor, and that his ink dries up before relating their distinguished, excellent qualities and one will not be surprised at his skipping over this and other similar traditions. There is neither might nor power but by Allah, the High and the Great."[30]

7. Conclusion

This brief review on the self-censorship that was exercised by the early historians and compilers of hadíth proves that absence of an event in the well known "early" books of Islamic history and hadíth does not necessarily mean that that event is a later invention by the Shí'as or is not considered credible. One must go beyond the artificial limits of "early" and official history of the Muslim people and also study the other "non-orthodox" sources to fully comprehend the real life drama that unfolded in the early days of the history of Islam.

* * *

[15] Most Muslim historians and commentators of the Qur'ãn have quoted this event. See the following Sunni sources: at-Tabari, at-Ta'ríkh, vol. 1 (Leiden, 1980 offset of the 1789 edition) p. 171-173; Ibn al-Athír, al-Kãmil, vol. 5 (Beirut, 1965) p. 62-63; Abu 'l-Fidã', al-Mukhtasar fi Ta'ríkhi 'l-Bashar, vol. 1 (Beirut, n.d.) p. 116-117; al-Khãzin, at-Tafsír, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1955) p. 127; al-Baghawi, at-Tafsír (Ma'ãlimu 't-Tanzíl), vol. 6 (Riyadh: Dar Tayyiba, 1993) p. 131; al-Bayhaqi, Dalã'ilu 'n-Nubuwwa, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1969) p. 428-430; as-Suyuti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthûr, vol. 5 (Beirut, n.d.) p. 97; and Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanzu 'l-'Ummãl, vol. 15 (Hyderabad, 1968) pp. 100, 113, 115. For further references, see 'Abdu 'l-Husayn al-Aminí, al-Ghadír, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1967) pp. 278-289. In English see, Rizvi, S. Saeed Akhtar, Imamate: the Vicegerency of the Prophet (Tehran: WOFIS, 1985) pp. 57-60. For an elaborate discussion on the isnãd and meaning of the Prophet's hadíth in this event, and also the variations in the early Sunni and Shi'a sources, see Dr. Sayyid Tãlib Husayn ar-Rifã'í, Yawmu 'd-Dãr (Beirut: Dar al-Azwã', 1986).

[16] Ibn Hishãm, as-Sírah an-Nabawiyya, vol. 1 (Cairo: Mustafa al-Halabi & Sons, 1955) p. 11-12; also see its English translation by A. Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1955) p. 691. See also the introduction by Dr. Asghari Mahdawi to the 6th century Persian translation by Rafí'u 'd-Dín Hamadãni of the Sirah entitled as Sirat-e Rasûlu 'l-lãh (Tehran, Bunyad-e Farhang-e Iran, 1360 [solar] AH) p. nûn.

[17] Ibn Hishãm, as-Sirah, vol. 1, p. 10.

[18] Abu Ja'far at-Tusi, Kitãbu 'l-Ãmãli, vol. 2 (Najaf: Maktabatu 'l-Haydari, 1964) p.

194-196.

[19] See the introduction to as-Sirah an-Nabawiyya, vol. 1, p. 15-17; also see Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad, p. xxxiv-xxxviii.

[20] See the 1879 edition of EJ Brill, Leiden (vol. 3, p. 1173), the 1908 edition of Dãru 'l-Qãmûsi 'l-Hadíth, Cairo (vol. 1&2, p. 217), and also the 1961 edition of Dãru 'l-Ma'ãrif, Cairo, edited by Muhammad Abu 'l-Fadl Ibrãhim (vol. 2, p. 321) in which the original words are intact. Even at-Tabari's 1988 English translation published by State University of New York, vol. 6 (translators: WM Watt and MV McDonald) p. 90-91 has maintained the original words of the Prophet without any omission.

[21] Antonie Wessels, A Modern Arabic Biography of Muhammad (Leiden: EJ Brill, 1972) p. 223, 245; also see 'Abdu 'l-Husayn Sharafu 'd-Dín al-Musawi, al-Murãji'ãt, annotated by Husayn ar-Rãzi (Beirut: n.p., 1982) p. 189.

[22] Haykal, Hayãt Muhammad (Cairo: 1st edition) p. 104.

[23] Haykal, Hayãt Muhammad (Cairo: 2nd edition, 1354) p. 139-140.

[24] Ibn Taymiyya, Minhãju 's-Sunnah, vol. 4 (Cairo: al-Matba'atu 'l-Kubra al-Amíriyya, 1322) p. 81.

[25] Sayyid Abu 'l-Qãsim al-Khû'I, Mu'jam Rijãli 'l-Hadíth, vol. 10 (Beirut: Madinatu 'l-'Ilm, 1983) p. 55-56.

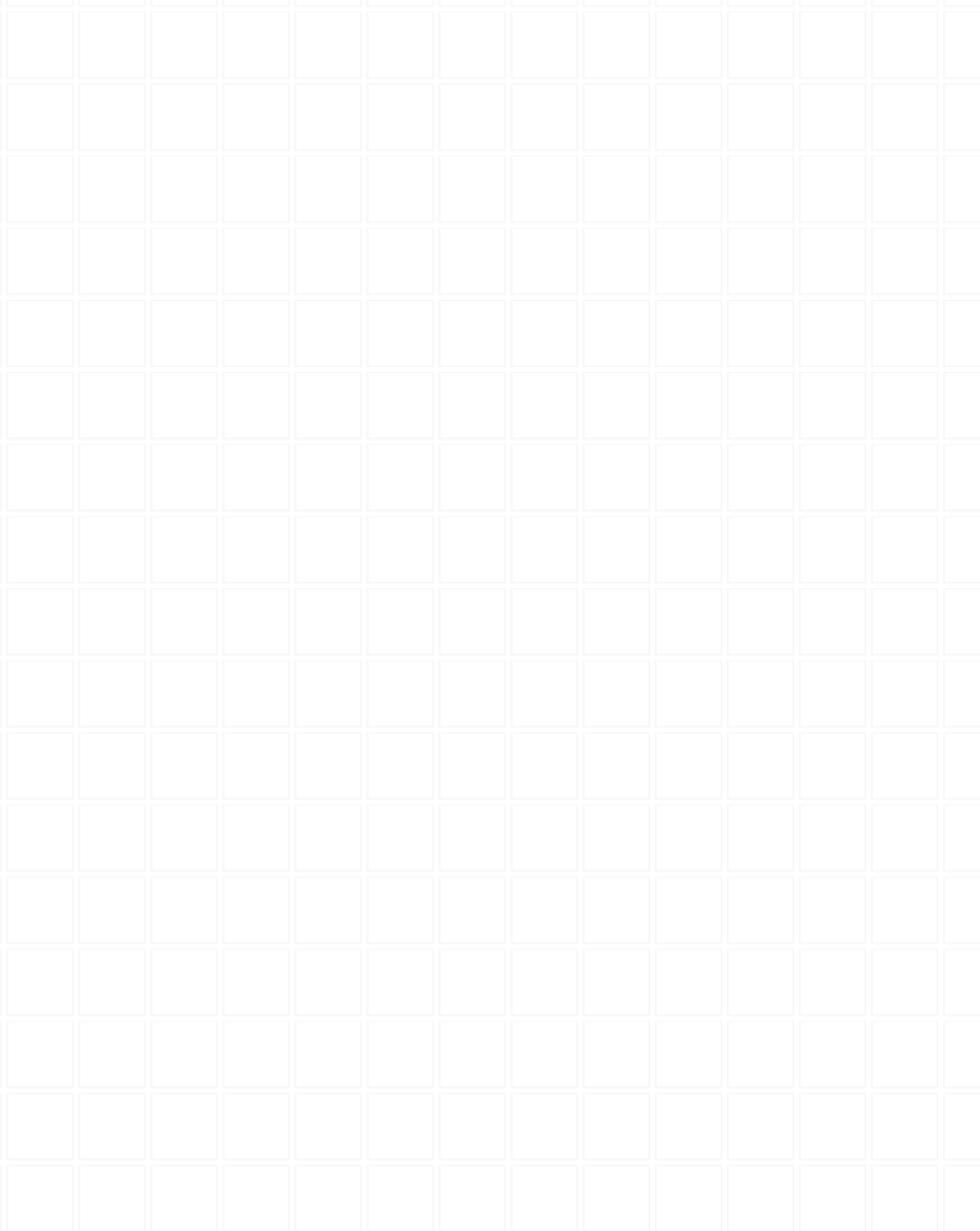
[26] Mutã' at-Tarãbíshí, Ruwãt Muhammad bin Ishãq bin Yasãr fi 'l-Maghãzi wa 's-Siyar wa Sã'iri 'l-Marwiyãt (Damascus: Dãru 'l-Fikr, 1994) p. 149.

[27] Ibid.

[28] S. Sharafu 'd-Dín al-Musawi, al-Murãji'ãt, p. 129; also its English translation by M. A. H. Khan, The Right Path (Blanco, Texas: Zahra Publication, 1986) p. 85-86. [Also see Yasin al-Jibouri's translation of *Al-Muraja'at*]

[29] Adh-Dhahabi, Mizãnu 'l-I'tidãl, vol. 2 (Egypt, Dar Ihyã'i 'l-Kutubi 'l-'Arabiyya, n.d.) p. 192.

[30] Sharafu 'd-Dín al-Musawi, al-Murãji'ãt, p. 191-192

Ghadir Khumm and the Orientalists

1. Introduction[31]

The 18th of Dhu 'l-Hijja is celebrated in the Shí'a world as the *'idd* of Ghadir Khumm in which Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said about Imam 'Ali: "Whomsoever's master (*mawla*) I am, this 'Ali is also his master." This event is of such significance to the Shí'as that no serious scholar of Islam can ignore it. The purpose of this paper is to study how the Orientalists handled the event of Ghadir Khumm. By "orientalists", I mean the Western scholarship of Islam and also those Easterners who received their entire Islamic training under such scholars.

Before proceeding further, a brief narration of the event of Ghadir Khumm would not be out of place. This will be especially helpful to those who are not familiar with the event. While returning from his last pilgrimage, the Prophet received the following command of Allãh: *"O the Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you from your Lord; if you do not do so, then [it would be as if] you have not conveyed His message [at all]. Allãh will protect you from the people."* (The Qur'ãn 5:67) Therefore he stopped at Ghadir Khumm on the 18th of Dhu 'l-Hijja, 10 AH to convey the message to the pilgrims before they dispersed. At one point, he asked his followers whether he, Muhammad, had more authority *(awla)* over the believers than they had over themselves; the crowd cried out, "Yes, it is so, O Apostle of Allãh." Then he took 'Ali by the hand and declared: "Whomsoever's master *(mawla)* I am, this 'Ali is also his master - *man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha 'Aliyun mawlahu*." Then the Prophet also announced his impending death and charged the believers to remain attached to the Qur'ãn and to his Ahlul Bayt. This summarizes the important parts of the event of Ghadir Khumm.

The main body of this paper is divided as follows: Part II is a brief survey of the approach used by the Orientalists in studying Shí'ism. Part III deals with the approach used to study Ghadir Khumm in particular. Part IV is a critical review of what M.A. Shaban has written about the event in his *Islamic History AD 600-750.* This will be followed by a conclusion.

2. Study of Shí'ism by the Orientalists

When the Egyptian writer, Muhammad Qutb, named his book as *Islam: the Misunderstood Religion,* he was politely expressing the Muslim sentiment about the way Orientalists have treated Islam and Muslims in general. The word "misunderstood" implies that at least a genuine attempt was made to understand

Islam. However, a more blunt criticism of Orientalism, shared by the majority of Muslims, comes from Edward Said, "The hardest thing to get most academic experts on Islam to admit is that what they say and do as scholars is set in a profoundly and in some ways an offensively political context. Everything about the study of Islam in the contemporary West is saturated with political importance, but hardly any writers on Islam, whether expert or general, admit the fact in what they say. Objectivity is assumed to inhere in learned discourse about other societies, despite the long history of political, moral, and religious concern felt in all societies, Western or Islamic, about the alien, the strange and different. In Europe, for example, the Orientalist has traditionally been affiliated directly with colonial offices."[32]

Instead of assuming that objectivity is inhere in learned discourse, Western scholarship has to realize that precommitment to a political or religious tradition, on a conscious or subconscious level, can lead to biased judgement. As Marshall Hudgson writes, "Bias comes especially in the questions he poses and in the type of category he uses, where indeed, bias is especially hard to track down because it is hard to suspect the very terms one uses, which seem so innocently neutral..."[33] The Muslim reaction to the image portrayed of them by Western scholarship is beginning to get its due attention. In 1979, the highly respected scholar trained in Western academia, Albert Hourani, said, "The voices of those from the Middle East and North Africa telling us that they do not recognize themselves in the image we have formed of them are too numerous and insistent to be explained in terms of academic rivalry or national pride."[34] This was about Islam and Muslims *vis-à-vis* the Orientalists.

When we focus on the **study of Shí'ism** by the Orientalists, the word "misunderstood" is not strong enough; rather it is an understatement. Not only is Shí'ism misunderstood, it has been ignored, misrepresented and studied mostly through the heresiographic literature of their opponents. It seems as if the Shí'ites had no scholars and literature of their own. To borrow an expression from Marx, "they cannot represent themselves, they must be represented," and that also by their adversaries!

The reason for this state of affairs lies in the paths through which Western scholars entered the field of Islamic studies. Hodgson, in his excellent review of Western scholarship, writes, "**First**, there were those who studied the Ottoman Empire, which played so major a role in modern Europe. They came to it usually in the first instance from the viewpoint of the European diplomatic history. Such scholars tended to see the whole of Islamdom from the political perspective of Istanbul, the Ottoman capital. **Second**, there were those, normally British, who entered Islamic studies in India so as to master Persian as good civil servants, or at least they were inspired by Indian interest. For them, the imperial transition of Delhi tended to be the culmination of

Islamicate history. **Third**, there were the Semitists, often interested primarily in Hebrew studies, who were lured into Arabic. For them, headquarters tended to be Cairo, the most vital of Arabic-using cities in the nineteenth century, though some turned to Syria or the Maghrib. They were commonly philologians rather than historians, and they learned to see Islamicate culture through the eyes of the late Egyptian and Syrian Sunni writers most in vogue in Cairo. Other paths-that of the Spaniards and some Frenchmen who focused on the Muslims in Medieval Spain, that of the Russians who focused on the northern Muslims-were generally less important."[35]

It is quite obvious that none of these paths would have led Western scholars to the centres of Shí'a learning or literature. The majority of what they studied about Shí'ism was channelled through the non-Shí'i sources. Hudgson, who deserves our highest praise for noticing this point, says, "All paths were at one in paying relatively little attention to the central areas of the Fertile Crescent and Iran, with their tendency towards Shí'ism; areas that tended to be most remote from western penetration."[36] And after the First World War, "the Cairene path to Islamic studies became the Islamicist's path par excellence, while other paths to Islamic studies came to be looked on as of more local relevance."[37]

Therefore, whenever an Orientalist stuided Shí'ism through Ottoman, Cairene or Indian paths, it was quite natural for him to be biased against Shí'a Islam. "The Muslim historians of doctrine [who are mostly Sunni] always tried to show that all other schools of thought other than their own were not only false but, if possible, less than truly Muslim. Their work described innumerable 'firqahs' in terms which readily misled modern scholars into supposing they were referring to so many 'heretical sects'."[38] And so we see that until very recently, Western scholars easily described Sunni'ism as 'orthodox Islam' and Shí'ism as a 'heretical sect'. After categorizing Shí'ism as a heretical sect of Islam, it became "innocently neutral" for Western scholars to absorb the Sunni scepticism concerning the early Shí'a literature. Even the concept of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation when one's life is in danger) was blown out of proportion and it was assumed that every statement of a Shí'a scholar had a hidden meaning. And, consequently, whenever an Orientalist studied Shí'ism, his precommitment to Judeo-Christian tradition of the West was compounded with the Sunni bias against Shí'ism.

One of the best examples of this compounded bias is found in the way the event of Ghadir Khumm was studied by the Orientalists, an issue that forms the main purpose of this paper.

3. Ghadír Khumm: From Oblivion to Recognition

The event of Ghadir Khumm is a very good example to trace the Sunni bias that found its way into the mental state of Orientalists. Those who are well-versed with the polemic writings of Sunnis know that whenever the Shí'as present a hadíth or a historical evidence in support of their view, a Sunni polemicist would respond in the following manner:

> Firstly, he will outright ***deny*** the existence of any such *hadíth* or historical event.
>
> Secondly, when confronted with hard evidence from his own sources, he will cast ***doubt*** *on the reliability* of the transmitters of that *hadíth* or event.
>
> Thirdly, when he is shown that all the transmitters are reliable by Sunni standards, he will give an ***interpretation*** to the hadíth or the event that will be quite different from that of the Shí'as.

These three levels form the classical response of the Sunni polemicists in dealing with the arguments of the Shí'as. A quotation from Rosenthal's translation of Ibn Khaldun's *The Muqaddimah* would suffice to prove my point. (Ibn Khaldun is quoting the following part from *al-Milal wa 'n-Nihal,* a heresiographic work of ash-Shahristãni.) According to Ibn Khaldun, the Shí'as believe that

> 'Ali is the one whom Muhammad appointed. The (Shí'ah) transmit texts (of traditions) in support of (this belief)...The authority on the Sunnah and the transmitters of the religious law do not know these texts. [1] Most of them are supposititious, or [2] some of their transmitters are suspect, or [3] their (true) interpretation is very different from the wicked interpretation that (the Shí'ah) give to them.[39]

Interestingly, the event of Ghadir Khumm has suffered the same fate at the hands of Orientalists. With the limited time and resources available to me at this moment, I was surprised to see that most works on Islam have ignored the event of Ghadir Khumm, indicating, by its very absence, that the Orientalists believed this event to be 'supposititious' and an invention of the Shí'as. Margoliouth's *Muhammad and the Rise of Islam* (1905), Brockelmann's *History of the Islamic People* (1939), Arnold and Guillaume's *The Legacy of Islam* (1931), Guillaume's *Islam* (1954), von Grunebaum's *Classical Islam* (1963), Arnold's *The Caliphate* (1965), and *The Cambridge History of Islam* (1970) have completely ignored the event of Ghadir Khumm.

Why did these and many other Western scholars ignore the event of Ghadir Khumm? Since Western scholars mostly relied on anti-Shí'a works, they naturally ignored the event of Ghadir Khumm. L. Veccia Vaglieri, one of the contributors to the second

edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1953), writes:

> Most of those sources which form the basis of our knowledge of the life of Prophet (Ibn Hishãm, al-Tabari, Ibn Sa'd, etc.) pass in silence over Muhammad's stop at Ghadir Khumm, or, if they mention it, say nothing of his discourse (the writers evidently feared to attract the hostility of the Sunnis, who were in power, by providing material for the polemic of the Shí'is who used these words to support their thesis of 'Ali's right to the caliphate). Consequently, the western biographers of Muhammad, whose work is based on these sources, equally make no reference to what happened at Ghadir Khumm.[40]

Then we come to those few Western scholars who mention the *hadíth* or the event of Ghadir Khumm but express their scepticism about its authority-the second stage in the classical response of the Sunni polemicists.

The first example of such scholars is Ignaz Goldziher, a highly respected German Orientalist of the nineteenth century. He discusses the *hadíth* of Ghadir Khumm in his *Muhammedanische Studien* (1889-1890) translated into English as *Muslim Studies* (1966-1971) under the chapter entitled as "The Hadíth in its Relation to the Conflicts of the Parties of Islam." Coming to the Shí'as, Goldziher writes:

> A stronger argument in their [Shí'as'] favour...was their conviction that the Prophet had expressly designated and appointed 'Ali as his successor before his death...Therefore the 'Alid adherents were *concerned with inventing* and authorizing traditions which prove 'Ali's installation by direct order of the Prophet. The most widely known tradition (the authority of which is not denied even by orthodox authorities though they deprive it of its intention by a different interpretation) is the tradition of Khumm, which *came into being* for this purpose and is one of the firmest foundation of the theses of the 'Alid party.[41]

One would expect such a renowned scholar to prove how the Shí'as "were concerned with inventing" traditions to support their theses, but nowhere does Goldziher provide any evidence. After citing at-Tirmidhi and al-Nasã'i in the footnote as the source for hadíth of Ghadir Khumm, he says, "Al-Nasã'i had, as is well known, pro-'Alid inclinations, and also at-Tirmidhi included in his collection tendentious traditions favouring 'Ali, e.g., the *tayr* tradition."[42] This is again the same old classical response of the Sunni polemicists-discredit the transmitters as unreliable or adamantly accuse the Shí'as of inventing the traditions.

Another example is the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1911-1938) which

has a short entry under "Ghadir Khumm" by F. Bhul, a Danish Orientalist who wrote a biography of the Prophet. Bhul writes, "The place has become famous through a tradition which had its origin among the Shi'is but is also found among Sunnis, viz., the Prophet on journey back from Hudaibiya (according to others from the farewell pilgrimage) here said of 'Ali: Whomsoever I am lord of, his lord is 'Ali also!"[43] Bhul makes sure to emphasize that the hadíth of Ghadir has "its origin among the Shí'is!"

Another striking example of the Orientalists' ignorance about Shí'ism is *A Dictionary of Islam* (1965) by Thomas Hughes. Under the entry of Ghadir, he writes, "A festival of the Shi'ahs on the 18th of the month of Zu 'l-Hijjah, when three images of dough filled with honey are made to represent Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmãn, which are struck with knives, and the honey is sipped as typical of the blood of the usurping Khalifahs. The festival is named for Ghadir, 'a pool,' and the festival commemorates, it is said, Muhammad having declared 'Ali his successor at Ghadir Khum, a watering place midway between Makkah and al-Madinah."[44] Coming from a Shí'a family that traces its ancestory back to the Prophet himself, having studied in Iran for ten years and lived among the Shí'as of Africa and North America, I have yet to see, hear or read about the dough and honey ritual of Ghadir! I was more surprised to see that even Vaglieri, in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia,* has incorporated that nonsense into her fairly excellent article on Ghadir Khumm. She adds at the end that, "This feast also holds an important place among the Nusayris." It is quite possible that the dough and honey ritual is observed by the Nusayris; it has nothing to do with the Shí'as. But do all Orientalists know the difference between the Shí'as and the Nusayris? I very much doubt so.

A fourth example from the contemporary scholars who have treaded the same path is Philip Hitti in his *History of the Arabs* (1964). After mentioning that the Buyids established "the rejoicing on that [day] of the Prophet's alleged appointment of 'Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khumm," he describes the location of Ghadir Khumm in the footnote as "a spring between Makkah and al-Madinah where Shí'ite tradition asserts the Prophet declared, 'Whomsoever I am lord of, his lord is 'Ali also'."[45] Although this scholar mentions the issue of Ghadir in a passing manner, he classifies the *hadíth* of Ghadir is a "Shí'ite tradition".

To these scholars who, consciously or unconsciously, have absorbed the Sunni bias against Shí'ism and insist on the Shí'ite origin or invention of the *hadíth* of Ghadir, I would just repeat what Vaglieri has said in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* about Ghadir Khumm:

> It is, however, certain that Muhammad did speak in this place and utter the famous sentence, for the account of this event has been preserved, either in a concise form or in detail, not only by al-Ya'kubi, whose sympathy for the 'Alid

> cause is well known, but also in the collection of traditions which are considered canonical, especially in the *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal; and the hadiths are so numerous and so well attested by the different *isnãds* that it does not seem possible to reject them.[46]

Vaglieri continues, "Several of these hadiths are cited in the bibliography, but it does not include the hadíth which, although reporting the sentence, omit to name Ghadir Khumm, or those which state that the sentence was pronounced at al-Hudaybiya. The complete documentation will be facilitated when the *Concordance* of Wensinck have been completely published. In order to have an idea of how numerous these hadiths are, it is enough to glance at the pages in which Ibn Kathir has collected a great number of them with their *isnads*."

It is time the Western scholarship made itself familiar with the Shí'ite literature of the early days as well as of the contemporary period. The Shí'a scholars have produced great works on the issue of Ghadir Khumm. Here I will just mention two of those:

1. The first is *'Abaqãtu 'l-Anwãr* in eleven bulky volumes written in Persian by Mir Hãmid Husayn al-Musawi (d. 1306 AH) of India. 'Allãmah Mir Hãmid Husayn has devoted three bulky volumes (consisting of about 1080 pages) on the *isnãd, tawãtur* and meaning of the *hadíth* of Ghadir. An abridged version of this work in Arabic translation entitled as *Nafahãtu 'l-Azhãr fi Khulãsati 'Abaqãti 'l-Anwãr* by Sayyid 'Ali al-Milãni has been published in twelve volumes by now; and four volumes of these (with modern type-setting and printing) are dedicated to the hadíth of Ghadír.

2. The second work is *al-Ghadír* in eleven volumes in Arabic by 'Abdul Husayn Ahmad al-Amini (d. 1970) of Iraq. 'Allãmah Amini has given with full references the names of 110 companions of the Prophet and also the names of 84 *tãbi'ín* (disciples of the companions) who have narrated the *hadíth* of Ghadir. He has also chronologically given the names of the historians, traditionalists, exegetists and poets who have mentioned the *hadíth* of Ghadir from the first till the fourteenth Islamic century.

The late Sayyid 'Abdu 'l-'Azíz at-Tabãtabã'í has stated that there probably is not a single hadíth that has been narrated by so many companions as the number we see (120) in the hadíth of Ghadír. However, comparing that number to the total number of people who were present in Ghadír Khumm, he states that 120 is just ten percent of the total audience. And so he rightly gave the following title to his paper: "*Hadíth Ghadír: Ruwãtuhu Kathíruna lil-Ghãyah...Qalíluna lil-Ghãyah* - Its Narrators are Very Many...Very Few".[47]

4. Shaban & His New Interpretation

Among the latest work by Western scholarship on the history of Islam is M.A. Shaban's *Islamic History AD 600-750* subtitled as "A New Interpretation" in which the author claims not only to use newly discovered material but also to re-examine and re-interpret material which has been known to us for many decades. Shaban, a lecturer of Arabic at SOAS of the University of London, is not prepared to even consider the event of Ghadir Khumm. He writes, "The famous Shí'ite tradition that he [the Prophet] desginated 'Ali as his successor at Ghadir Khumm should not be taken seriously."

Shaban gives two 'new' reasons for not taking the event of Ghadir seriously:

> "Such an event is inherently improbable considering the Arabs' traditional reluctance to entrust young and untried men with great responsibility. Furthermore, at no point do our sources show the Madinan community behaving as if they had heard of this designation."[48]

Let us critically examine each of these reasons given by Shaban.

> **1.** The traditional reluctance of the Arabs to entrust young men with great responsibility.

First of all, had not the Prophet introduced many things to which the Arabs were traditionally reluctant? Did not the Meccans accept Islam itself very reluctantly? Was not the issue of marrying a divorced wife of one's adopted son a taboo among the Arabs? This 'traditional reluctance,' instead of being an argument against the designation of 'Ali, is actually part of the argument used by the Shí'as. They agree that the Arabs (in particular, the Quraysh) were reluctant to accept 'Ali as the Prophet's successor not only because of his young age but also because he had killed their leaders in the early battles of Islam. According to the Shí'as, Allãh also knew about this reluctance and that is why after ordering the Prophet to proclaim 'Ali as his successor ("O the Messenger! Convey what had been revealed to you..."), He reassured His Messenger by saying that, "Allãh will protect you from the people." (5:67) The Prophet was commissioned to convey the message of Allãh, no matter whether the Arabs liked it or not.

Moreover, this 'traditional reluctance' was not an irrevocable custom of the Arab society as Shaban wants us to believe. Jafri, in *The Origin and Early Development of Shí'a Islam,* says, "[O]ur sources do not fail to point out that, though the 'Senate' *(Nadwa)* of pre-Islamic Mecca was generally a council of elders only, the sons of the chieftain Qusayy were privileged to be exempted from this age restriction and were admitted to the council despite their youth. In later times more liberal concessions seems to have been in vogue; Abu Jahl was admitted despite his youth,

and Hakim b. Hazm was admitted when he was only fifteen or twenty years old." Then Jafri quotes Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, "There are no monarchic king over the Arabs of Mecca in the Jahiliya. So whenever there was a war, they took a ballot among chieftains and elected one as 'King', were he a minor or a grown man. Thus on the day of Fijar, it was the turn of the Banu Hashim, and as a result of the ballot Al-'Abbãs, who was then a mere child, was elected, and they seated him on the shield."[49]

Thirdly, we have an example in the Prophet's own decisions during the last days of his life when he entrusted the command of the army to Usãmah bin Zayd, a young man who was hardly twenty years of age.[50] He was appointed over the elder members of the Muhãjirín (the Quraysh) and the Ansãr; and, indeed, many of the elders resented this decision of the Prophet.[51] If the Prophet of Islam could appoint the young and untried Usãmah bin Zayd over the elders of the Quraysh and Ansãr, then why should it be "inherently improbable" to think that the Prophet had designated 'Ali as his successor?

2. The traditional reluctance to entrust untried men with great responsibility.

Apart from the young age of 'Ali, Shaban also refers to the reluctance of the Arabs in entrusting "untried men with great responsibility." This implies that the Arabs selected Abu Bakr because he had been "tried with great responsibilities." I doubt whether Mr. Shaban would be able to substantiate the implication of his claim from Islamic history. One will find more instances where 'Ali was entrusted by the Prophet with greater responsibilities than was Abu Bakr. 'Ali was left behind in Mecca during the Prophet's migration to mislead the enemies and also to return the properties of various people which were given in trust to the Prophet. 'Ali was tried with greater responsibilities during the early battles of Islam in which he was always successful. When the ultimatum *(barã'at)* against the pagan Arabs of Mecca was revealed, first Abu Bakr was assigned to convey it to the Meccans; but later on this great responsibility was taken away from him and entrusted to 'Ali. 'Ali was entrusted with safety of the city and citizens of Medina while the Prophet had gone on the expedition to Tabûk. 'Ali was appointed the leader of the expedition to Yemen. These are just the few examples that come to mind at random. Therefore, on a comparative level, 'Ali bin Abu Tãlib was a person who had been tried and entrusted with greater responsibilities more than Abu Bakr.

3. The behaviour of the Madinan community about declaration of Ghadir Khumm.

Firstly, if an event can be proved true by the accepted standard of hadíth criticism (of the Sunnis, of course), then the reaction of the people to the credibility of that event

is immaterial.

Secondly, the same 'traditional reluctance' used by Shaban to discredit the declaration of Ghadir can be used here against his scepticism towards the event of Ghadir. This traditional reluctance, besides other factors that are beyond the scope of this paper,[52] can be used to explain the behaviour of the Madinan community.

Thirdly, although the Madinan community was silent during the events which kept 'Ali away from caliphate, there were many among them who had witnessed the declaration of Ghadir Khumm. On quite a few occasions, Imam 'Ali implored the companions of the Prophet to bear witness to the declaration of Ghadir. Here I will just mention one instance that took place in Kufa during the reign of Imam 'Ali, about 25 years after the Prophet's death.

Imam 'Ali heard that some people were doubting his claim of precedence over the previous caliphs, therefore, he came to a gathering at the mosque and implored the eyewitnesses of the event of Ghadir Khumm to verify the truth of the Prophet's declaration about his being the lord and master of all the believers. Many companions of the Prophet stood up and verified the claim of 'Ali. We have the names of twenty-four of those who testified on behalf of 'Ali, although other sources like *Musnad* of Hanbal and *Majma' az-Zawã'id* of Hãfidh al-Haythami put that number at thirty. Also bear in mind that this incident took place 25 years after the event of Ghadir Khumm, and during this period hundreds of eye witnesses had died naturally or in the battles fought during the first two caliphs' rule. Add to this the fact that this incident took place in Kufa which was far from the centre of the companions, Medina. This incident that took place in Kufa in the year 35 AH has itself been narrated by four companions and fourteen *tãbi'in* and has been recorded in most books of history and tradition.[53]

In conclusion, the behaviour of the Madinan community after the death of the Prophet does not automatically make the declaration of Ghadir Khumm improbable. I think this will suffice to make Mr. Shaban realize that his is not a 'new' interpretation; rather it exemplifies, in my view, the first stage of the classical response of the Sunni polemicists-an outright denial of the existence of an event or a hadíth which supports the Shí'a view-which has been absorbed by the majority of Western scholars of Islam.

***5. The Meaning of "*Mawla"**

The last argument in the strategy of the Sunni polemicists in their response to an event or a hadíth presented by the Shí'as is to give it an interpretation that would safeguard their beliefs. They exploit the fact that the word *"mawla"* has various meanings: master, lord, slave, benefactor, beneficiery, protector, patron, client,

friend, charge, neighbour, guest, partner, son, uncle, cousin, nephew, son-in-law, leader, follower. The Sunnis say that the word *"mawla"* uttered by the Prophet in Ghadir does not mean "master or lord", it means "friend".

On the issue of the hadíth of Ghadír, this is the stage where the Western scholarship of Islam has arrived. While explaining the context of the statement uttered by the Prophet in Ghadir Khumm, L. Veccia Vaglieri follows the Sunni interpretation. She writes:

> On this point, Ibn Kathír shows himself yet again to be percipient historian: he connects the affair of Ghadir Khumm with episodes which took place during the expedition to the Yemen, which was led by 'Ali in 10/631-2, and which had returned to Mecca just in time to meet the Prophet there during his Farewell Pilgrimage. 'Ali had been very strict in the sharing out of the booty and his behaviour had aroused protests; doubt was cast on his rectitude, he was reproached with avarice and accused of misuse of authority. Thus it is quite possible that, in order to put an end to all these accusations, Muhammad wished to demonstrate publicly his esteem and love for 'Ali. Ibn Kathir must have arrived at the same conclusion, for he does not forget to add that the Prophet's words put an end to the murmuring against Ali.[54]

Whenever a word has more than one meaning, it is indeed a common practice to look at the context of the statement and the event to understand the intent of the speaker. Ibn Kathir and other Sunni writers have connected the event of Ghadir Khumm to the incident of the expedition to Yemen. But why go so far back to understand the meaning of *"mawla"*, why not look at the whole sermon that the Prophet gave at Ghadir Khumm itself? Isn't it a common practice to look at the immediate context of the statement, rather than look at remote events, in time and space?

When we look at the immediate context of the statement uttered by the Holy Prophet in Ghadir Khumm, we find the following:

1. The question that the Prophet asked just before the declaration. He asked, "Do I not have more authority upon you *(awla bi kum)* than you have yourselves?" When the people replied, "Yes, surely," then the Prophet declared: "Whosoever's *mawla* am I, this 'Ali is his *mawla*." Surely the word *"mawla"*, in this context, has the same meaning as the word "*awla:* have more authority".[55]

2. After the declaration, the Prophet uttered the following prayer: "O Allãh! Love him who loves 'Ali, and be enemy of the enemy of 'Ali; help him who helps 'Ali, and forsake him who forsakes 'Ali." This prayer itself shows that 'Ali, on that day, was

being entrusted with a position that would make some people his enemies and that he would need supporters in carrying out his responsibilities. This could not be anything but the position of the *mawla* in the sense of ruler, master and lord. Are helpers ever needed to carry on a 'friendship'?

3. The statement of the Prophet in Ghadir that: "It seems imminent that I will be called away (by Allãh) and I will answer the call." It was clear that the Prophet was making arrangements for the leadership of the Muslims after his death.

4. The companions of the Prophet congratulated 'Ali by addressing him as "Amirul Mumineen - Leader of the Believers". This leaves no room for doubt concerning the meaning of *mawla.*

5. The occasion, place and time. Imagine the Prophet breaking his journey in mid-day and detaining nearly one hundred thousand travellers under the burning sun of the Arabian desert, making them sit in a thorny place on the burning sand, and making a pulpit of camel saddles, and then imagine him delivering a long sermon and at the end of all those preparations, he comes out with an announcement that "Whosoever considers me a friend, 'Ali is also his friend!" Why? Because some (not all the hundred thousand people who had gathered there) were upset with 'Ali in the way he handled the distribution of the booty among his companions on the expedition to Yemen! Isn't that a ridiculous thought?

Another way of finding the meaning in which the Prophet used the word *"mawla"* for 'Ali is to see how the people in Ghadir Khumm understood it. Did they take the word *"mawla"* in the sense of "friend" or in the meaning of "master, leader"?

Hassãn ibn Thãbit, the famous poet of the Prophet, composed a poem on the event of Ghadir Khumm on the same day. He says:

فقال له قم يا علي فانني رضـــــــــــيتك من بعدي اماما و هاديا

He then said to him: "Stand up, O 'Ali, for
I am pleased to make you Imam & Guide after me.

In this line, Hassãn ibn Thãbit has understood the term *"mawla"* in the meaning of "Imam and Guide" which clearly proves that the Prophet was talking about his successor, and that he was not introducing 'Ali as a "friend" but as a "leader".

Even the words of 'Umar ibn al-Khattãb are interesting. He congratulated Imam 'Ali in these words: "Congratulations, O son of Abu Tãlib, this morning you became *mawla*

of every believing man and woman."[56] If *"mawla"* meant "friend" then why the congratulations? Was 'Ali an 'enemy' of all believing men and women before the day of Ghadir?

These immediate contexts make it very clear that the Prophet was talking about a comprehensive authority that 'Ali has over the Muslims comparable to his own authority over them. They prove that the meaning of the term *"mawla"* in hadíth of Ghadír is not "friend" but "master, patron, lord, or leader".[57]

Finally, even if we accept that the Prophet uttered the words "Whomsoever's *mawla* I am, this 'Ali is his *mawla*" in relation to the incident of the expedition to Yemen, even then *"mawla"* would not mean "friend". The reports of the expedition, in Sunni sources, say that 'Ali had reserved for himself the best part of the booty that had come under the Muslims' control. This caused some resentment among those who were under his command. On meeting the Prophet, one of them complained that since the booty was the property of the Muslims, 'Ali had no right to keep that item for himself. The Prophet was silent; then the second person came with the same complaint. The Prophet did not respond again. Then the third person came with the same complaint. That is when the Prophet became angry and said, "What do you want with 'Ali? He indeed is the *waliy* after me."[58]

What does this statement prove? It says that just as the Prophet, according to verse 33:6, had more right *(awla)* over the lives and properties of the believers, similarly, 'Ali as the *waliy,* had more right over the lives and properties of the believers. The Prophet clearly puts 'Ali on the highest levels of authority *(wilãyat)* after the Prophet himself. That is why the author of *al-Jãmi'u 's-Saghír* comments*,* "This is indeed the highest praise for 'Ali."

6. Conclusion

In this brief survey, I have shown that the event of Ghadir Khumm is a historical fact that cannot be rejected; that in studying Shí'ism, the precommitment to Judeo-Christian tradition of the Orientalists was compounded with the Sunni bias against Shí'ism. Consequently, the event of Ghadir Khumm was ignored by most Western scholars and emerged from oblivion only to be handled with scepticism and re-interpretation.

I hope this one example will convince at least some Western scholars to re-examine their methodology in studying Shí'ism; instead of approaching it largely through the works of heresiographers like ash-Shahristãni, Ibn Hazm, al-Maqrizi and al-Baghdãdi who present the Shí'as as a heretical sect of Islam, they should turn to more objective works of both the Shí'as as well as the Sunnis.

The Shí'as are tired, and rightfully so, of being portrayed as a heretical sect that emerged because of political circumstances of the early Islamic period. They demand to represent themselves instead of being represented by their adversaries.

* * *

السلام عليك يا مولاي يا امير المؤمنين

يا امين الله فى ارضه و سفيره فى خلقه و حجته البالغة على عباده

السلام عليك يا دين الله القويم و صراطه المستقيم.

السلام عليك ايها النبأ العظيم الذى هم فيه مختلفون و عنه يسئلون.

و اشهد يا امير المؤمنين، ان الشاك فيك مأمن بالرسول الامين

و ان العادل بك غيرك عائد عن الدين القويم

الذى ارتضاه لنا رب العالمين و اكمله بولايتك يوم الغدير.

Peace be upon you,

O my Master, Amiru 'l-Mu'minin!

O the trustee of Allãh in His earth,

His representative among His creatures,

and His convincing proof for His servants...

Peace be upon you,

O the upright religion of Allãh and His straight path.

Peace be upon you, O the great news about whom they disputed and about whom they will be questioned.

I bear witness, O Amiru 'l-Mu'minin,

that the person who doubts about you

has not believed in the trustworthy Messenger;

and one who equates you to others has astrayed

from the upright religion which

the Lord of the universe has chosen for us and

which He has perfected through your wilãyat

on the day of Ghadir.

(Excerpts from Ziyãrat of the Day of Ghadír)

Notes:

[1] These writers represent the Salafi/Wahhãbi camp, and their anti-Shí'a works has been distributed world-wide with the courtesy of the petro-dollars of certain Middle-Eastern countries, especially after the Sunni masses started getting inspiration by the revolution of Iran which was led by Shí'a 'ulamã'.

[2] Fajru 'l-Islãm, p. 33 as quoted and then refuted by Muhammad Husayn Kãshiful 'l-Ghitã', Aslu 'sh-Shí'a wa Usûluhã (Qum: Mu'assasa al-Imam 'Ali, 1415) p. 140, 142; also see the latter's English translation, The Shí'a Origin and Faith (Karachi: Islamic Seminary, 1982).

[3] Fazlur Rahman, Islam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976) p. 171-172.

[31] This is a revised and expanded version of a paper first published simultaneously in the bi-monthly The Light (June 1990) magazine and in Ghadir (Toronto: ISIJ & NASIMCO, July 1990) under the title of "Orientalists & the Event of Ghadir Khumm".

[32] Said, E.W., Covering Islam (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981) p. xvii.

[33] Hodgson, M.G.S., The Venture of Islam, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) p. 27.

[34] Hourani, A. "Islamic History, Middle Eastern History, Modern History," in Kerr, M.

H. (ed) Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems (California: Undena Publications, 1979) p. 10.

[35] Hodgson, op. cit., p. 39-40.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Hodgson, op. cit., p. 66-67.

[39] Ibn Khaldun, The Muqaddimah, tr. Franz Rosenthal, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) p. 403. In original Arabic, see vol. 1 (Beirut: Maktabatul Madrasah, 1961) p. 348.

[40] EI2, p. 993 under "Ghadir Khumm".

[41] Goldziher, Muslim Studies, tr. Barber and Stern, vol. 2 (Chicago: Aldine Inc., 1971) pp. 112-113.

[42] Ibid.

[43] EI1, p. 134-135 under "Ghadir Khumm".

[44] Hughes, Thomas P., A Dictionary of Islam (New Jersey: Reference Book Publishers, 1965) p. 138.

[45] Hitti, P.K., History of the Arabs (London: Macmillan & Co., 1964) p. 471.

[46] EI2, p. 993 under "Ghadir Khumm".

[47] At-Tabãtabã'í, 'Abdu 'l-'Azíz, al-Ghadír fi 't-Turãthi 'l-Islãmi (Qum: Nashr al-Hãdi, 1415) p. 7-8.

[48] Shaban, Islamic History AD 600-750 (Cambridge: University of Press, 1971) p. 16.

[49] Jafri, S.H.M., The Origin and Early Developments of Shí'a Islam, p. 22.

[50] Haykal, M.H., Hayãt Muhammad (2nd edition) p. 478; also see its translation, The Life of Muhammad, tr. al-Fãruqi (n.p.: American Trust Publications, 1976) p. 492.

[51] See Ibn Sa'd's at-Tabaqãt and other major works on sirah.

[52] For more details, see Rizvi, S.S.A., Imãmate, p. 120-121.

[53] For full references, see al-Amini, al-Ghadír, vol. 1 (Tehran: Mu'assasatu 'l-Muwahhidi, 1976) p. 166-186.

[Also see section on Reminders by Imam 'Ali [a] in Ghadir Khumm: Appointment of Imam 'Ali in the Qur'an, ***Hadith***, History]

[54] EI2 p. 993-994 under "Ghadir Khumm".

[55] Al-Amini gives the names of 64 Sunni traditionalists who have quoted the preceding question, included among them are Ahmad bin Hanbal, Ibn Mãjah, an-Nasã'i, and at-Tirmidhi. See al-Ghadír, vol. 1, p. 370-371.

[Also see section on Acknowledgement of Authority in Ghadir Khumm: Appointment of Imam 'Ali in the Qur'an, ***Hadith***, History]

[56] See al-Amini, al-Ghadír, vol. 1, pp. 270-283 for references from Sunni sources.

[Also see section on Oath of Allegiance in Ghadir Khumm: Appointment of Imam 'Ali in the Qur'an, ***Hadith***, History]

[57] These contexts are from al-Amini's al-Ghadîr as summarized in Rizvi, Imãmate: the Vicegerency of the Prophet.

[58] See an-Nasã'í, Khasã'is 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib, p. 92-93; at-Tirmidhi, Sahíh, vol. 5, p. 632 (hadíth # 3712), and al-Jãmi'u 's-Saghír.

Appointment of 'Ali: Explicit or Implicit?

1. Introduction

We have gathered[59] here tonight in memory of the person who has given us our identity as "Shi'a Muslims". We take pride in calling ourselves "Shi'as of 'Ali" - the Partisans or Followers of 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (a.s.).

Tonight I am going to talk on the caliphate of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib because of questions asked by many people about the recent controversy on "the explicit appointment" of the Imam to the position of caliphate versus "the implicit appointment". Not only adults, but also youths have approached me with this question; and it is my duty to ensure that the beliefs of our youths in the imamate and caliphate of Amir al-Mu'minín stays firm without any shadow of doubt.

The controversy started regarding the statement of a learned Shí'a scholar published in the *Bio Ethics Encyclopaedia* under the entry of "Islam" in which he writes:

> "Muhammad died in 632 C.E., having brought the whole of Arabia under the Medina government. However, he had left no explicit instructions regarding succession to his religious-political authority."[60]

Initially, when I was given a copy of the article, I did not think much of it because I realized that it was a paper written for a very wide audience. (Although ideally the issue of succession should not have been mentioned in that article at all, its deletion would not have harmed the main body of the article.) However, the response of the learned writer to the questions sent to him via internet by some Shí'as from the U.K. became a matter of concern for me. He responded as follows:

> "On the question whether there was no EXPLICIT instruction regarding succession to the Prophet's 'religious-political authority' let it be clear that the statement while asserting that there were no EXPLICIT (that is, distinctly expressed, clearly stated, not merely implied) instruction in the matter of succession to the 'Prophet's religious-political authority,' it asserts by implication that there was an IMPLICIT (that is, necessarily involved though not plainly expressed) direction in the matter. This implicit direction of the Prophet was expressed on several occasions in his lifetime, including finally at al-Ghadir.

> "It was also because of this absence of explicit statement on these occasions that Imam 'Ali never used any of these occasions, including al-Ghadir, to put forward his candidacy as the only rightful successor of the Prophet."[61]

After the 21st of Ramadhan 1418, the learned scholar issued another statement in which he reaffirmed his belief in the absence of the explicit appointment of Imam 'Ali by writing:

> "The foundation of our faith, that is the Shi'a faith, is based on this IMPLICIT sense. Historically (the only position that can be taken in the article here) the source of dissension in the early community was the absence of EXPLICIT directions regarding the succession in the community."
>
> "The statement of the wilaya *(man kuntu mawla[hu] fa hadha 'Aliyyun mawla [hu]),* which is the documentation for the Shí'a acclamation in support of the Imamate of Imam 'Ali, is regarded as an implicit rather than explicit statement of the Prophet regarding the 'succession of his comprehensive authority.' The reason is that the word mawla in Arabic is ambiguous as far as the 'succession' itself is concerned."[62]

2. The Explicit vs Implicit

First let us see whether or not this division of appointment of caliphate into "implicit" and "explicit" has any historical precedence in the history of Islamic theology. For the sake of time restraint, let me just state the following historical facts:

1. On the issue of caliphate, the Muslims have different views. The **Sunni** Muslims do not believe that the Prophet appointed anyone as his successor, neither explicitly nor implicitly; and that it was left for the community to choose whomsoever they wanted. The **Shi'as**, on the other hand, believe that the Prophet appointed 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib as the caliph and successor after him.

2. All the **Shi'a sects** (i.e., the Imamiyya/Ithnã-'Ashariyya and both the existing Ismã'iliyya groups: the Bohras and the Agha Khanis) believe that the Prophet of Islam explicitly appointed Imam 'Ali on many occasions as his caliph and successor.

3. The **Zaydiyya** sect has a belief different from the Sunnis as well as the Shi'as. Although they believe that 'Ali was the best and the most qualified for caliphate, they still accept Abu Bakr and 'Umar ibn al-Khattãb as the first and the second successors of the Prophet respectfully; but they do not accept 'Uthmãn bin 'Affãn as the third caliph.

4. Historically speaking, it is the **Jãrûdiyya** sub-sect of the Zaydiyya that believed that the Prophet had appointed Imam 'Ali not by naming him but by just describing his qualities: "*nassa bi 'l-wasf dûna 't-tasmiyya* - he [the Prophet] appointed by the description without naming [the person]."[63]

It is from this belief that the *nass* (the directive for appointment) is divided into "*an-nass al-jali*-the clear/explicit directive" and "*an-nass al-khafi*-the hidden/implicit directive".

But the Shi'a **Imãmiyya** Ithnã-'Ashariyya have never subscribed to the idea that "the foundation of our faith is based on this implicit sense." They have believed all along that the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) on several occasions, very clearly and very openly appointed 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib as his successor, caliph and Imam of the Muslims after him.[64] Only when the Shi'a Imãmiyya theologians were in debate against their opponents (including the Zaydiyya), they used the term "*an-nass al-jali*" on the principle of dealing with the opponent on his own terms.[65]

So historically speaking, no Shi'a Imamiyya theologian has treaded exclusively the path of implicit or implied appointment of Amiru 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (a.s.) as "the foundation of our faith" and none of them have taken the hadíth of Ghadír as an implicit appointment.

5. **Why** did the Zaydiyya insist on the implicitness of the appointment of 'Ali to caliphate? Since some of their sub-sects had accepted the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar, believing in the explicit statements of the Prophet appointing 'Ali would portray those two caliphs in a very negative light-it would mean that they knowingly opposed the explicit statements of the Prophet! So in order to safeguard the prestige of the first two caliphs, the appointment of 'Ali was shrouded in ambiguity by saying that it was not explicit but only implied. And since it was not explicit, the caliphs could not be blamed for usurping the caliphate from Amiru 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali!

This shows the serious implications of believing that the appointment of 'Ali was only implicit; it would mean that the blame of whatever happened after the Prophet's death on the issue of succession is to be placed on the Prophet himself, and not on the caliphs. It would mean that the first two caliphs are not to be blamed for usurping the caliphate from Imam 'Ali because they were doing what they thought, in the absence of any explicit instruction, was the best for Islam.

So when the objections of the Shí'a community against the learned scholar increased, in the last days of Ramadhãn 1418, he issued a general circular addressed to the Shí'as via the Internet:

> "I am taking this opportunity to state in the most ABSOLUTE terms that not only do I believe in the unequivocal authenticity of the event of al-Ghadir which took place on the 18th of Dhul-Hijja, 11AH/632 CE; I believe that the statement by the Prophet 'Everyone whose master I am, also has 'Ali as a master,' to be the explicit designation of the Imam 'Ali to the office of the Leadership of the Muslim Community, as upheld by the Twelver Shí'a faith."[66]

3. The First Explicit Appointment

Islam began when the Prophet became 40 years old. Initially, the mission was kept a secret. Then three years after the advent of Islam, the Prophet was ordered to commence the open declaration of his message. This was the occasion when Almighty Allãh revealed the verse "*And warn thy nearest relations.*" (26:214)

When this verse was revealed, the Prophet organized a feast which is known as "the Feast of the Clan" (*da'wat dhi 'l-'ashíra*). This is the first time that the Prophet openly and publicly called the relations to accept him as the Messenger and Prophet of Allãh. It is also the same feast in which the Prophet declared 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib very openly, very clearly, and very explicitly as his successor and caliph. I will just summarize what the Prophet said:

> O Sons of 'Abdu 'l-Muttalib! By Allãh, I do not know of any person among the Arabs who has come to his people with better than what I have brought to you. I have brought to you the good of this world and the next, and I have been commanded by the Lord to call you unto Him. Therefore, who amongst you will support me in this matter so that he may be my brother *(akhí)*, my successor *(wasiyyí)* and my caliph *(khalifatí)*?

The Prophet (s.a.w.) used the words "my brother, my successor, my caliph". This is as explicit as it can get in the very first call to Islam! No one answered except 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib who was only around fifteen years old at that time. The Prophet called 'Ali closer to himself, patted his neck, and said:

> "Verily this is my brother, my successor, and my caliph amongst you. Therefore, listen to him and obey."[67]

This is very explicit because the audience understand the appointment of 'Ali very clearly. Some of them, including Abu Lahab, even joked with Abu Tãlib that your nephew, Muhammad, has ordered you to listen to and obey your own son! At the least, this shows that the appointment was clear and explicit, not just implied.

The greatest proof of the explicit nature of this appointment at the very early stage of

Prophet Muhammad's mission is the attempt by Sunni writers to conceal the words used by the Prophet. For example, the famous Muslim historian, Ibn Jarír at-Tabari (d. 310 AH), has recorded this incident with the crucial words intact in his *Ta'ríkhu 'l-Umam wa 'l-Mulûk*. The 1879 edition of his *Ta'ríkh,* published in Leiden (Netherlands) has the words: "...this is my brother, my successor and my caliph..." But when it came to at-Tabari's *Tafsír,* while commenting on the verse 26:214, at-Tabari himself or the editors have changed the words as follows: "...this is my brother, and so-and-so..."

All these attempts to delete the whole incident from the pages of history or change the crucial words "my successor and my caliph" into "so-and-so" clearly shows that those terms were very explicit in supporting the appointment of Imam 'Ali as the successor of the Prophet. If it had been otherwise, then there was no need on the part of our opponents to hide or change these words.

4. Abu Sufyãn Knew But Others Didn't?

Insisting on the implicitness of the appointment of 'Ali safeguards the prestige of the first two caliphs. Instead of looking for the truth and then judging the people, they want to twist the truth to safeguard the positions of the people.

It is difficult to believe that the companions of the Prophet did not hear him appointing 'Ali on so many different occasions; and knowing that they were Arabic speaking Qurayshi, it is unacceptable to think that they did not clearly understand the appointment. One way of knowing this is to go to an interesting turn of event that took place after the Prophet's death.

When 'Ali and the Banu Hãshim were busy in the funeral rites of the Prophet, a person comes to their door and offers his help for caliphate. That person was Abu Sufyãn. Yes, Abu Sufyãn, the archenemy of the Prophet who fought many battles against Islam and Muslims, and only surrendered when he could no longer fight the Muslims. He surrendered just a couple of years before the Prophet's death.

He comes to 'Ali's house and recites a poem in the praise of the Prophet's family. Then he said: "O Banu Hãshim! O Banu 'Abd Manãf! Will you accept that Abu Fasíl... rules over you? By Allãh! If you wish, I can fill it [i.e., the city of Medina] with horses and soldiers."

'Ali bin Abi Tãlib knew that Abu Sufyãn was not sincere, that he was just trying to take advantage of the conflict on the issue of succession after the Prophet. Abu Sufyãn wanted Banu Hãshim and the group of Abu Bakr/'Umar to fight one another and weaken one another so that Banu Umayya could take advantage of the situation

and gain its lost supremacy over the Arabs. And so Imam 'Ali replied: "Go away, O Abu Sufyãn! By Allãh you do not mean what you are saying! You have always been deceiving Islam and its people; and we are busy with [the funeral of] the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.). And [as for those who are conspiring for caliphate], each person is responsible for what he does."[68]

It is indeed unbelievable that Abu Sufyãn, with his background, knew that 'Ali had the right to caliphate while the other 'great' companions did not know or did not understand the Prophet clearly.

It seems that Abu Sufyãn further tried to incite 'Ali to take up arms for his right of caliphate. At that time, 'Ali responded by saying: "If I speak [for my right], they say, 'He is hungry for power.' And if I keep quiet, they say, 'He fears death.' No, not at all; after all that chaos. By Allãh, this son of Abu Tãlib is more at ease with death than an infant is at its mother's breast!"[69]

5. Why Didn't 'Ali Use These Arguments?

Did Imam 'Ali not use the arguments of Da'wat dhi 'l-'Ashira or Ghadír soon after the Prophet's death because they were just implicit statements? The learned Shí'a scholar wrote: "It is also because of this absence of explicit statement on these occasions that Imam 'Ali never used any of these occasions, including al-Ghadir, to put forward his candidacy as the only rightful successor of the Prophet."[70] This is indeed a novel way of looking at the conflict of caliphate. The Sunni opponent would just extend this view a little bit further and say that 'Ali did not use these arguments because there was no argument at all.

In order to understand why 'Ali did not use the arguments at that particular time, we have to understand the circumstances, the opponents, and the consequences of the actions of Imam 'Ali (a.s.).

The Circumstances:

When the Prophet passed away from this world, there were different kinds of people among the Muslim community.

First there was the so-called fifth columnists among the Muslims who were waiting for a civil war so as to put an end to Islam and gain power over the Arabs. Abu Sufyãn and his clan represented this group. They were neither in Saqifa nor with 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib. The Qur'ãn also talks about the presence of hypocrites among the Muslims. (See 9:97.) Then there was Musaylima al-Kadhdhãb and Sajjah bint al-Harath both claimed prophethood and had gained some following among the

Bedouins.

After surveying the circumstances, what could 'Ali have done?

Let me give you an example to illustrate the decision of Imam 'Ali. During the caliphate of 'Umar, there is a story of an infant who was being claimed by two women as their baby. The decision was forwarded to Imam 'Ali. When the Imam found both women insisting on their claim, he ordered that the infant be cut into two, and each woman be given one half. What was the reaction of the real mother and the fake mother? The fake mother decided to go along with the decision even if it meant cutting the baby into two halves whereas the real mother announced her readiness to give up the child.

Islam is the baby in our discussion; the usurpers would do anything to keep the power even if it meant endangering the survival of Islam itself. 'Ali, on the other hand, as the true custodian of Islam, was prepared to relinquish the power for sake of saving Islam from total destruction. That is why Imam 'Ali did not resort to the sword or allow Abu Sufyãn and others to incite him into armed opposition. He accepted deprivation of his personal right of caliphate over the destruction of Islam.

He accepted deprivation but did not stop from protesting whenever and wherever the chance availed itself for him. When he was deprived again after 'Umar's death, he addressed the Consultative Committee who had chosen 'Uthmãn and said, "You have certainly known that I am the most rightful of all others for the caliphate. By Allãh, so long as the affairs of the Muslims remain intact and there is no oppression in it save on myself, I shall be quiet..."[71]

The Opponents:

As for the opponents, they were not ready to listen to any word of reason. When you know that your opponents are not opposing you because of ignorance, and that they are ready even to kill you-there is no sense in mentioning all the proofs right there and then. You may wonder why I am saying this.

You recall that in the Da'wat dhi 'l-'Ashira, the Prophet had used three words for Imam 'Ali: "my brother, my successor, and my caliph." The last two terms were very crucial for the claim of 'Ali to caliphate. The first one "my brother" was not that forceful or threatening to the opponents. That is why even when the Sunni writers started concealing the hadith of the Prophet, they left the words "my brother" intact but they replaced the words "my successor, my caliph" with the words "so-and-so".

Now to understand the attitude and obstinacy of the opponents of 'Ali, let us see just

one part of the heated exchange of words between Imam 'Ali (a.s.) and 'Umar ibn al-Khattãb during those early days of caliphate.

I will just summarize what happened before the actual conversation: After 'Umar and his group imposed Abu Bakr over the Ansãr (the inhabitants of Medina) at Saqifa, they came to the Prophet's Mosque and declared that Abu Bakr has been chosen as the caliph so all should come and pledge allegiance to him. Then they were informed that 'Ali, other members of Banu Hãshim and some prominent companions of the Prophet had gathered in the house of Fãtima, refusing to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr sent messages but nobody came to pledge allegiance *(bay'at)*. Then 'Umar came with his people and even put firewood at the door to burn the house down if no one came out! They finally forced the door open, injuring Fãtima in the process, and forcefully brought all people to the Mosque to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr.

Imam 'Ali was also arrested and brought to the Mosque. There was an exchange of words between the Imam and Abu Bakr in which the Imam used only the argument used by the Quraysh (Meccans) against the Ansãr. The Quraysh had gained the upper hand over the Ansãr by saying that the Prophet was from their tribe, therefore, they have more right to the caliphate; Imam 'Ali extended that line of argument and said that we are from the family of the Prophet, therefore, we have more right to the caliphate than you.[72]

Ibn Qutayba ad-Dinwari, a Sunni historian of caliphate, continues the narration:

They said to 'Ali: "Pledge allegiance!"

'Ali said: "If I do not do, then what?"

They said: "Then, by Allãh besides whom there

is no god, we shall chop off your neck!"

'Ali said: "Then you would be killing a **servant**

of Allãh and the **brother** of His Messenger!"

'Umar said: "As for being a servant of Allãh, yes;

as for being the brother of His Messenger, no![73]

What does this statement of 'Umar say? Out of the three things that the Prophet had mentioned about Imam 'Ali, the least threatening was "my brother," but during those days, 'Umar was not even prepared to accept 'Ali as "the brother of the Prophet"! Now you tell me why 'Ali did not say, "I am also the Prophet's successor and caliph"?

Ibn Qutaybah goes on with his narration: While this conversation between Imam 'Ali and 'Umar was going on, "Abu Bakr was silent, not saying anything. Then 'Umar turned to him and said, 'Why don't you issue your order concerning him?' Abu Bakr said, 'I do not wish to impose anything on him as long as Fãtima is by his side.'"

Yes, it was Fãtima who protected the life of 'Ali during those bleak days of the Muslim history. 'Ali leaves the oppressive atmosphere, goes to the Prophet's grave and complains by addressing the Prophet: "O son of my mother! The people oppressed me and had almost killed me." These are the same words Hãrun used to complain about the Israelites when Prophet Musa came back with the Tawrãt. (See 7:150) Remember that the Prophet of Islam himself had said, "O 'Ali, you are to me like Hãrun was to Musa; except that there is no prophet after me."[74]

6. Didn't 'Ali Ever Use These Arguments?

'Ali did not use the arguments during the early days of caliphate for two reasons: 1. for the sake of Islam's well-being and survival; 2. because of the obstinacy of his opponents. It had nothing to do with the implicit vs. explicit nature of appointment. The truth is that whenever the opportunity availed itself, Imam 'Ali always talked about his right to the caliphate of the Prophet.

No one can blame 'Ali for making the claim or presenting its proof at a later date. He himself said, "No person is to be blamed for delay in (securing) his own right but the blame lies on him who takes what he is not entitled to."[75]

In the year 35 AH, while the Imam was in Kufa, he heard that some people doubted his claim of precedence over the previous three caliphs. Therefore, he came to the gathering at the mosque and implored the eyewitnesses of the event of Ghadir Khumm to verify the truth of the Prophet's declaration about his being "the *mawla*" (master, leader, lord) of those whose master was the Prophet himself. In most sources, we have the names of twenty four companions of the Prophet who testified to the truth of Imam 'Ali's claim. Other sources like *Musnad* of Ibn Hanbal and *Majma'u 'z-Zawã'id* of al-Haythami put that number at thirty.[76]

One should bear in mind that this incident took place 25 years after the event of Ghadir Khumm, and during that period hundreds of eyewitnesses had died naturally or in the battles fought during that time. Add to this the fact that this incident took

place in Kufa which was far from Medina, the center of the companions.

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[59] This section is based on the notes of two lectures in memory of Imam 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib (a.s.) given at Ja'fari Islamic Centre, Toronto, on the eve of 19th and 21st Ramadhãn, 1418 (1998).

[60] Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Islam," The Bio Ethics Encyclopaedia, vol. 3 (1995) p. 1289.

[61] See the response of Dr. Sachedina widely distributed on the inter-net among the Shi'as.

[62] See Sachedina's circular addressed to "All the Followers of the Ahlul-Bayt".

[63] See 'Allãma al-Hilli, Manãhiju 'l-Yaqín, ed. M.R. al-Ansãri (Qum, 1416) p. 306; al-Mufíd, Awã'ilu 'l-Maqãlãt, p. 41-42. After 'Ali, the Zaydiyya believe in Hasan and Husayn, and then in Zayd bin 'Ali. After Zayd, any descendant of 'Ali and Fãtima who does jihãd against the tyrants, is pious and is learned in religion can become their Imam.

[64] See an-Nawbakhti (circ. 3rd century AH), Firaqu 'sh-Shí'a (Beirut, 1984) p. 19. This book is actually a summarized version of Maqãlãtu 'l-Imãmiyya of Sa'd bin 'Abdullãh al-Ash'ari al-Qummi and has been erroneously attributed to an-Nawbakhti. See S.M. Riza al-Husayni al-Jalãli, "'Firaqu 'sh-Shí'a' aw 'Maqãlãtu 'l-Imãmiyya' li 'n-Nawbakhti am li 'l-'Ashari?" in the first issue of Turãthunã, (Qum: Mu'assasa Ãli 'l-Bayt, 1405) pp. 29-49.

[65] See, for example, one of the most famous books of Shi'a theology, Kashfu 'l-Murãd, the commentary (sharh) of 'Allãmah al-Hilli on Muhaqqiq at-Tusi's Tajridu 'l-I'tiqãdãt, tr. Abu 'l-Hasan Sha'rãni (Tehran: Islamiyya, n.d.) p. 516-518. In Usûlu 'l-Fiqh, the term "an-nass" means a statement whose meaning is very clear and specific. In this sense, an-nass, by definition, cannot be implicit or ambiguous, and so it cannot be divided into jali and khafi.

[66] Issued in late Ramadhãn or early Shawwãl 1418 on the internet.

[67] For more on this event, see the chapter, "Self-Censorship in Muslim History" above.

[68] Al-Mufíd, al-Irshãd, p. 190; al-Ya'qûbi, at-Ta'ríkh, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar Sadir) p. 126; Sibt ibn al-Jawzi, Tadhkiratu Khawãssi 'l-Umma, p. 121; Ibn 'Abdi Rabbih, al-'Iqdu 'l-Faríd, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1983) p. 257; al-Qadi 'Abdu 'l-Jabbãr, al-Mughni fi 't-Tawhíd wa 'l-'Adl, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Misriyya li 't-Ta'lif) p. 121; Ibn Abi 'l-Hadíd, Sharh Nahji 'l-Balãgha, vol. 6 (Cairo: Dar Ihya Kutubi 'l-'Arabiya, 1959) p. 17.

[69] See Nahju 'l-Balãgha, sermon no. 5.

[70] See the quotation in the first part of this chapter.

[71] Nahju 'l-Balãgha, sermon # 74; see also at-Tabari in his Ta'ríkh and Ibn al-Athír in his al-Kãmil in the events of 23 AH; al-Azhari, Tahzibu 'l-Lugha, vol. 1 (Cairo edition) p. 341.

[72] What I have written above cannot even be considered as a summary of the events of Saqifa and its aftermath. For details of the events in English, based on the earliest sources of Muslim history, see Rizvi, Imãmate, pp. 113-126; al-'Askari, S. Murtaza, 'Abdu'l-lãh ibn Sabã' and Other Myths (Tehran: Wofis, 1984) pp. 69-95; Jafri, The Origin & Early Development, pp. 27-53.

[73] For the conversation mentioned here, see Ibn Qutaybah ad-Dinwari, al-Imãmah wa 's-Siyãsah, part 1 (Cairo: al-Halabi Publications, n.d.) p. 20. Ibn Qutaybah's own words are as follows:

فقالوا: "بايع." فقال: "اِن انا لم افعل فمه؟"

فقالوا: "اذاً و الله الذى لا اله الا هو، نضرب عنقك!"

فقال: "اذاً تقتلون عبد الله و اخا رسوله!"

فقال عمر: "امّا عبد الله، فنعم. امّا اخو رسوله، فلا!"

وابو بكر ساكت لا يتكلم. فقال له عمر: "ا لاَ تامر فيه بامرك؟"

فقال: "لا اكرهه على شيء ما كانت فاطمة الى جنبه."

[74] Imam al-Bukhãri has quoted this in two places in his Sahíh, once in a brief form (without "except there is no prophet after me") and then in full. See Sahíh, vol. 5,

Arabic with English translation by M. Mohsin Khan (Beirut: Dar al-'Arabiyya, n.d.) p. 47, 492-493.

[75] Nahju 'l-Balãgha, saying # 166.

[76] This incident of Kufa has been narrated by four companions of the Prophet and fourteen of their disciples, and has been recorded in most books of history and tradition. See al-Amini, al-Ghadír, vol. 1 (Tehran: Mu'assatu 'l-Muwahidi, 1976) pp. 166-186.

[Also see section on Reminders by Imam 'Ali [a] in Ghadir Khumm: Appointment of Imam 'Ali in the Qur'an, ***Hadith***, History]

Chapter 5

The Concept of Ahlul Bayt: Tribal or Islamic?

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1. The Meaning of Ahlul Bayt

"Ahlul Bayt" literally means people of the house and it refers to the family or children of a person. In Islamic terminology, it refers to the family of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.).

What is the basis of the importance given to the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet? Is there anything about it in the Qur'ãn and the sayings of the Prophet? Or is this an old Arab tribal concept with no basis in Islamic sources? The Qur'ãn and the hãdíth have a lot to say about the Ahlul Bayt. However, before we even go to the Qur'ãn, a clarification on the concept of Ahlul Bayt is necessary.

The term "family of the prophet" can be applied on three kinds of relationships:

- Those who are related to the prophet by blood or marriage ties only.
- Those who are related to the prophet by soul and spirit only.
- Those who are related to the prophet by blood or marriage ties as well as by soul and spirit.

When the Qur'ãn or the Prophet uses the term "Ahlul Bayt", it could not be the first or the second group.

The first group is only physically related to the Prophet but not spiritually, like the son of Prophet Nûh or the wife of Prophet Lût or Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle. Allãh clearly says to Prophet Nûh about his son: "*Innahu laysa min ahlik* - He is not of your family." (11:45-46) That is, he is not one of your spiritual family; he is only physically related to you. Lût's wife and the Prophet's uncle, Abu Lahab, both are counted as people of the Hell-Fire.

The second category is considered "Ahlul Bayt" only in a metaphorical sense, not in the real meaning; for example, Salmãn al-Fãrsi about whom the Prophet said, "Salmãn is from us, the Ahlul Bayt." This leaves us with the third group.

2. Who Are the "Ahlul Bayt"?

Many people were related to the Prophet both by blood and marriage as well as by soul and spirit. But the term "Ahlul Bayt" as used by the Qur'ãn and the Prophet does

not apply to all of them. We see that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) clearly applied the Qur'ãnic term "Ahlul Bayt" to four people: Fãtima, 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them all).

The **first verse** (33:33) is of purification (*tathír)*:

> *"Verily Allãh intends to keep away the abomination from you, O the Ahlul Bayt, and purify you a thorough purification."*

No Muslim would question the inclusion of Fãtima, 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn in the "Ahlul Bayt". The disagreement arises in the inclusion of the wives and other Hashimite relatives of the Prophet among the "Ahlul Bayt". For example, during our time, a book has been published in Saudi Arabia entitled as *'Allimu Awlãdakum Hubb Ãl-i Bayti 'n-Nabi* (Teach Your Children the Love of the Family of the Prophet) by Dr. Muhammad 'Abduh Yamãni in 1991.[77] The order in which Yamãni talks about the Prophet's family is very interesting: he first talks about Khadija, then Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, Zaynu 'l-'Ãbidyn, and then ends with the other wives of the Prophet.

Wilfred Madelung makes the following observation on the verse of purification: "Who are the 'people of the house' here? The pronoun referring to them is in the masculine plural, while the preceding part of the verse is in the feminine plural. This change of gender has evidently contributed to the birth of various accounts of a legendary character, attaching the latter part of the verse to the five People of the Mantle *(ahl al-kisã')*: Muhammad, 'Ali, Fãtima, Hasan and Husayn. In spite of the obvious Shí'ite significance, the great majority of the reports quoted by al-Tabari in his commentary on this verse support this interpretation."[78]

From the many reports that the Sunni sources narrated, here I am just quoting one as an example. Abu Sa'íd al-Khudari quotes Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet in whose house the incident of Kisã' took place. She says: Jibra'íl came with the verse of purification; the Prophet called Hasan, Husayn, Fãtima and 'Ali, and he gathered them together and covered them with the mantle. Then he said, "O Allãh, these are my Ahlul Bayt, so 'keep away the abomination from the Ahlul Bayt, and purify them thoroughly.'" Umm Salama (may Allãh be pleased with her) said, "Am I with them, O Apostle of Allãh?" The Prophet said, "You stay in your place, and you are virtuous."[79]

Since this verse is situated right in the midst of the verses addressed to the wives of the Prophet, some Sunnis use its position to include the wives in the "Ahlul Bayt". But the problem with their interpretation is the difference in the pronouns: the sentences before and after the verse of purification have feminine plural pronouns whereas the statement itself has the masculine plural pronouns. This is internal evidence that the

statement of purification was an independent verse that was revealed on its own in a different event unrelated to the wives.

In spite of the great majority of reports by Sunnis supporting the view that this part of the verse was a separate revelation that was later attached to the rest, Madelung has difficulty in accepting it as such. In his interpretation, he has tried to apply the term 'Ahlul Bayt' primarily to the Bani Hãshim and then, in the second place, to the wives. But he has failed to explain the gender difference in the pronouns used in the whole passage.

The Shí'ite and Sunni reports clearly apply the term "Ahlul Bayt" in the statement of purification to the Ahlul Kisã', excluding the wives of the Prophet. And the gender difference in the pronouns was to show the contrast between the "Ahlul Bayt" and the wives. In words of Mirza Mahdi Puya, "While the address in the beginning of the verse is in the feminine gender - there is the transition here in the address from the feminine to the masculine gender. While referring to the consorts of the Holy Prophet, the pronouns also are consistently feminine. For a mixed assembly of men and women, generally the masculine gender is used. This transition in the grammatical use of the language, makes it quite obvious that this clause is quite a different matter used for a different group other than the previous one, and has been suitably placed here to show a comparative position of the Ahlu 'l-bayt in contrast to the wives of the Holy Prophet."[80]

Another important verse of the Qur'ãn that talks about the Ahlul Bayt is 42:23 in which Allãh, *subhãnahu wa ta'ãla,* says:

> *"(O Muhammad) Say, 'I do not ask for any reward for this (bringing of Allãh's message) except the love for the near kinship.'"*

The fact that this verse was revealed concerning the Ahlul Bayt, the family of the Prophet, is beyond any doubt. Imam Shãfí'i, the founder of the Sunni Shãfí'í school of law, has explained the meaning of this verse in a poem:

يا اهل بيت رسول الله حبكم فرض من الله فى القرآن انزله

كفاكم من عظيم القدر انكم من لم يصل عليكم لا صلاة له

O Ahlul Bayt of the Messenger of Allãh, your love,

Is a duty from Allãh, mentioned in the Qur'ãn.

In your honour, it is sufficient that one's prayer,

Is incomplete without praying for blessings on you.[81]

The Sunni polemicists have tried to reject the Shí'a point of view by the following arguments: (1) This verse was revealed in Mecca when Hasan and Husayn were not yet born, so how could it be applied on the Ahlul Bayt in the sense of Ahlul Kisã'? (2) Since it was revealed in Mecca, it is addressing the Quraysh by asking them 'to love Muhammad because he is from their kinship.' (3) Some say that it refers to all the Hashimites, and not just the Ahlul Bayt in the Shí'i definition.

First of all, the commentators of the Qur'ãn overwhelmingly state that even though chaper 42 is a Meccan surah, its verses 23-25, 27 were revealed in Medina. This makes the first and second arguments mentioned above baseless.

Secondly, the commandment asking for "love of the kinship of the Prophet" cannot apply to all of his kin because there were good as well as evil people among them; and so one has to restrict the import of this verse to those who were physically as well as spiritually connected to the Prophet. And no one can argue that 'Ali, Fãtimah, Hasan, and Husayn were not among those who were physically as well as spiritually related to the Prophet, even though he might extend this title to other members of Hashimite.

Finally, there are many reports in Sunni sources in which the Prophet applies this verse to the Ahlu 'l-Kisã'. For example, when this verse was revealed, the people asked the Prophet: "Who are these near kin of yours whose love is obligatory upon us?" He replied, "'Ali, Fãtima, and their two sons." He repeated this three times.[82]

3. "Ahlul Bayt Not A Tribal Concept

What I have stated above is not a new interpretation; I have just summarized the arguments of the Shí'a faith supported by reports from the Sunnis that have existed for centuries. And so I was surprised to see what the learned scholar had written about the concept of Ahlul Bayt:

> "The *shi'a* took advantage of the intimate historical relationship of 'Ali with Muhammad and of the old Arab tribal concept of *ahl al-bayt* (people of the household)-the family from whom chiefs were chosen-and zealously supported the candidacy of the 'Alids..."[83]

It does not behove a person from Shí'ite background to say that the Shí'a took advantage "of the old Arab tribal concept of ahl al-bayt"! So now the concept of Ahlul

Bayt becomes a concept of the pre-Islamic/*jãhiliyya* era that was used by the Shí'as to forward their claim about the imãmate of 'Ali and his descendants!

It is indeed sad that a scholar, from a Shí'í background, could not discuss the concept of Ahlul Bayt from the Qur'ãnic perspective but a non-Muslim scholar, Wilfred Madelung, has been able to discuss at length the importance that was given to the families of prophets before Islam and then deals with the Qur'ãnic verses specific to the Ahlul Bayt.[84] Although we disagree with Madelung's broad definition of Ahlul Bayt we totally agree with his conclusion to that section in which he says, "The Qur'ãn advises the faithful to settle some matters by consultation, but not the succession to prophets. That, according to the Qur'ãn, is settled by divine election, and God usually chooses their successors, whether they become prophets or not, from their own kin."[85]

It seems the learned Shí'a scholar is echoing the views of Marshall Hodgson and Fazlur Rahman. Marshall Hodgson writes, "The Alids-especially those descending from Fãtimah-came to be called Ahl al-Bayt, 'people of the house' (an old tribal term referring to the family from whom chiefs were chosen..."[86]

While commenting on the claim made by the Shí'as of Kufa that caliphate be restored in the family of 'Ali, Fazlur Rahman writes: "The motives that led to this curious legitimist claim on part of the Kufan Arabs are not very clear, except...the fact that the Prophet had been from the Banu Hashim came to be easily exploited."[87] Fazlur Rahman implies that the concept of Ahlul Bayt (that is, 'Ali and the Prophet were from the Banu Hãshim) was "exploited" by the Kufan Shí'as to promote their claim for the imamate of 'Ali's descendants.

Who took advantage of the pre-Islamic traditions in the dispute on caliphate? 'Ali was denied his rightful caliphate by the Quraysh on pretext of the supposed old Arab tradition that leadership goes to the older people and not to those who were relatively young. 'Ali, in comparison to Abu Bakr, was younger in age and therefore, on the basis of the old Arab tradition, was not suitable for leadership.[88] So it was the Quraysh who relied on the "old Arab tribal" tradition to usurp the caliphate from 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib.

Who "exploited" and "took advantage" of their relationship to the Prophet? It was the Qurayshi group in Saqifa that exploited the fact that the Prophet was from their tribe, and, therefore, they had more right to the caliphate than their opponents from the Ansãr (the inhabitants of Medina).[89]

When Imam 'Ali was informed about the debate between the Quraysh and the Ansãr at Saqifa, he asked, "What did the Quraysh plead?"

People said, "They argued that they belong to the lineal tree of the Prophet."

'Ali commented by saying, "They argued by the tree but they destroyed its fruits."[90] The tree refers to "the tribe of Quraysh" and the fruits refer to "the family of the Prophet".

* * *

[77] Published by Dãru 'l-Qiblah li 'th-Thaqãfati 'l-Islãmiyya in Jeddah.

[78] Madelung, The Succession to Muhammad, p. 14-15.

[79] As-Suyûti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthûr, vol. 5, p. 197. Also see at-Tabari, Jãmi'u 'l-Bayãn, vol. 7, p. 22; Muhibbu 'd-Dín at-Tabari al-Makki, Dhakhã'iru 'l-'Uqba, p. 55-60.

[80] See note no. 1857 (p. 1261) in the Holy Qur'ãn, translated by S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali. For other quotation from Sunni sources on this verse and its application to the Prophet, Fãtima, 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn (peace be upon them all), see SSA Rizvi, Imamate: the Vicegerency of the Prophet (Tehran: WOFIS, 1985) p. 49-54; Sayyid Murtaza al-'Askari, Verse of Purification (Bombay: World Islamic Network, 1998) which is an incomplete translation of his Hadíthu 'l-Kisã' fi Masãdiri 'l-Madrasatayn (Tehran: Nashr Tawhid, 1997). For a comprehensive discussion on this verse and its relation to the Ahlul Bayt, see Syed Ja'far Murtaza al-'Ãmili, Ahlu 'l-Bayt fi Ãyati 't-Tathír (Beirut: Dãru 'l-Amír li 'th-Thaqãfah, 1993).

[81] Muhammad bin Idrís ash-Shãfi'í, Diwãnu 'sh-Shãfi'í, ed. Muhammad al-Khafãji (Jeddah: Maktabah Dar Hirã', n.d.) p. 106.

[82] For an exhausting discussion on this verse of "love the kinship", see Ja'far as-Subhãni, Mafãhímu 'l-Qur'ãn, vol. 4 (Beirut: Daru 'l-Azwã', 1986) pp. 17-72.

[83] Abdulaziz Sachedina, Islamic Messianism, p. 6.

[84] See Madelung, The Succession to Muhammad, p. 6-17.

[85] Ibid, p. 17.

[86] Marshall GS Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) p. 260.

[87] Fazlur Rahman, Islam, p. 171.

[88] See, for example, Ibn Qutayba ad-Daynwari, al-Imãmah wa 's-Siyãsah, p. 18; M. A. Shaban, Islamic History AD 600-750, p. 16. Sachedina himself says the following about wilaya: "The new thing about it was this that in the Arab culture, the Arabs were never used to see a young person assuming the leadership. In Arab culture it was impossible for a thirty year old young man to become a leader because the Arabs believed that an older person has to become a leader..." From his 6th speech in Muharram (1419) 1998 in Toronto.

[89] There were two contesting groups in Saqifa: the Quraysh who had migrated from Mecca (known as Muhajirin) and the inhabitants of Medina (known as Ansãr). For the arguments employed by the Muhãjirin in Saqifa see the following English titles: SSA Rizvi, Imamate, pp. 113-126; Murtaza al-'Askari, 'Abdullãh bin Sabã and Other Myths (Tehran: WOFIS, 1984) pp. 69-95; Muhammad R. al-Muzaffar, Saqifa (Qum: Ansariyan, 1998).

[90] Sayyid Razi, Nahju 'l-Balagha, sermon 67. For Sunni sources, see at-Tabari, Ta'ríkh, vol. 6, p. 263 and Ibn 'Abdi 'l-Barr, al-Isti'ãb under biography of 'Awf bin Athãthah.

Wilãyat and Its Scope

1. What is Wilãyat?

"Wilãyat," derived from *wilã',* means power, authority or a right of certain kind. In Shí'a theology, "*wilãyat*" is the authority invested in the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt as representatives of Almighty Allãh on this earth.

According to the late Murtaza Mutahhari, *wilãyat* has four dimensions:

> The right of love and devotion *(wilã'-e muhabbat):* This right places the Muslims under the obligation of loving the Ahlul Bayt.
>
> The authority in spiritual guidance *(wilã'-e imãmat):* This reflects the power and authority of the Ahlul Bayt in guiding their followers in spiritual matters.
>
> The authority in socio-political guidance *(wilã'-e zi'ãmat):* This dimension of *wilãyat* reflects the right that the Ahlul Bayt have to lead the Muslims in social and political aspects of life.
>
> The authority of the universal nature *(wilã'-e tasarruf):* This dimension reflects universal power over the entire universe that the Prophet and Ahlul Bayt have been vested with by the grace of Almighty Allãh.[91]

Using this division of *wilãyat*'s dimensions, I would like to point out the areas of agreement and disagreement among the various Muslim groups.

The First Dimension: The Right of Love

All Muslims unanimously accept the first dimension of *wilãyat* of Ahlul Bayt. Loving the Ahlul Bayt is one of the "*dharûriyyãt ad-dín,* the essential parts of the Islamic faith." The inclusion of *salawãt*[92] in the daily ritual prayers is a sufficient proof of this. See the famous anti-Shí'a books like *as-Sawã'iqu 'l-Muhriqa* of Ibn Hajar al-Makki and *Tuhfa-e Ithnã-'Ashariyya* of Shah 'Abdul 'Aziz Dehlawi, and you will realize that the Sunni polemicists labour painfully to explain that they are against the Shí'a people but not against the Shí'a Imams for they know that loving the Ahlul Bayt is an essential part of Islamic faith.

Love for the Ahlul Bayt is enshrined in verse 42:23 that we have already discussed in the last chapter. Here I shall just quote one more hadíth from the Sunni sources. Imam 'Ali said, "By Allãh the One who has spilt the grain and created the soul, verily the Prophet (a.s.) has promised that none shall love me but the believer and none shall hate me but the hypocrite."[93] Actually Jãbir bin 'Abdullãh al-Ansãri and Abu Sa'íd al-Khudari, the two famous companions of the Prophet, used to say: "We did not identify the hypocrites but by their hatred for 'Ali."[94]

It is a common view of Shí'a scholars that whoever rejects one of the *dharûriyyãt ad-dín,* then he is no longer considered a member of the Islamic faith.[95] It is also based on this principle that the Khawãrij and the Nawãsib (i.e., those who express hatred or enimosity towards the Ahlul Bayt) are considered as non-Muslims by Shí'a jurists.[96]

The Second Dimension: The Spiritual Guidance

The second dimension of the *wilãyat* is a commonly held belief of the Shí'as as well as majority of the Sunnis who belong to Sufi orders. Nothing reflects this more than the interpretation given by Maulawi Salãmat 'Ali, a Sunni scholar of India, to the hadíth of Ghadir. He writes in *at-Tabsira,* "The Ahlu 's-Sunnah do not doubt the Imamate of Amíru 'l-Mu'minín ['Ali]; and that is indeed the essence of faith. It is, however, necessary that the import of the ahãdíth of Ghadír be the spiritual Imamate and not [the political] khilãfat. This is the meaning derived from the statements of the Ahlu 's-Sunnah and the scholars of Sufism, and, consequently, the allegiance of all the [Sufi] orders reach Amíru 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib and through him they are connected to the Messenger."[97]

Other than the Naqshbandi order, all Sufis trace the chain of their spiritual masters back to the Imams of the Ahlul Bayt, ending with Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib as the spiritual authority *par excellence* after the Prophet.[98] The Naqsbandi order traces its spiritual leadership back to Imam Ja'far as-Sãdiq and then follows the line through his mother to Muhammad bin Abi Bakr and then to Abu Bakr. This diversion from Imam as-Sãdiq to Abu Bakr is, however, not valid because Muhammad bin Abi Bakr was raised from a very young age by Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib who married Muhammad's mother, Asmã' bint Umays, after Abu Bakr's death. The only spiritual master that Muhammad bin Abi Bakr knew was Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (a.s.).

The Third & Fourth Dimensions: Socio-Political & Universal Authority

The third and fourth dimensions of *wilãyat* are unique Shí'í beliefs, and they are considered as part of the "*dharûriyyãt al-madhhab,* the essential parts of Shí'a sect." It is the common view of our scholars that anyone who rejects one of the *dharûriyyãt*

al-madhhab, is not considered a member of the Shí'a sect.

THE STATUS OF AHLUL BAYT AMONG MUSLIMS

	Sunnis	Sufis	Shí'as
Love of Ahlul Bayt	✔	✔	✔
Spiritual Guidance of the Ahlul Bayt	✘	✔	✔
Political Leadership of the Ahlul Bayt	✘	✘	✔
Universal Authority of the Ahlul Bayt	✘	✘	✔

It is important to note that whenever the Shí'as use the term "Imãmate" or "Imãm", it encompasses all the four dimensions of *wilãyat.* It excludes neither the spiritual and universal authority nor the social and political leadership.[99] In this sense, the Shí'í term "Imãmate" or "Imãm" is more comprehensive than the Sunni term "khilãfat" or "khalifa". In books dealing with the Shí'a-Sunni debate of the leadership after the Prophet, the focus is more on the socio-political leadership but not in the sense of denying the spiritual and universal authority of the Imam. So while reading or discussing the issue of succession of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), one should not lose the universal import of the status of an Imam from the Shí'a point of view.

2. The Universal Wilãyat

It seems necessary to explain the fourth dimension of the *wilãyat* in more detail for the benefit of the readers.

The fourth dimension is the universal authority that the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt have been vested with by the Almighty Allãh. It is an authority that makes it possible for the *wali* to exercise his power over everything that exists. In the words of Ayatullah al-Khumayni, "It is a vicegerency pertaining to the whole of creation, by virtue of which all the atoms in the universe humble themselves before the holder of authority."[100]

This authority of the chosen servants of Allãh is totally dependent on His discretion

and power. It should not be seen in the horizonal form but in the vertical form vis-à-vis the power of Almighty Allãh. As long as we maintain the vertical hierarchy of the power, we have safeguarded the *tawhíd* (unity and oneness) of Allãh.

For example, all Muslims believe that it is Allãh who gives life and death to the people. The Qur'ãn itself says,

> *"Allãh takes the souls at the time of their death."* (39:42)

But at the same time, the Qur'ãn also attributes death to the angels by saying,

> *"Say: It is the angel of death (who is given charge of you) who shall cause you to die."* (32:11)

If you place the imports of these two verses side-by-side (i.e., horizontal form), then you are guilty of *shirk,* polytheism; but if you place them in the vertical form (with the power of the angels beneath and dependent upon the power of Allãh), then you have safeguarded the *tawhid.*

Similarly, if we place the power and authority of the Prophets and the Imams in the vertical form (with the conviction that their power is beneath and dependent upon the power of Allãh), then we have safeguarded the *tawhíd* as well as the status of the chosen servants of Allãh.

The Qur'ãn gives various examples of the persons who had been given the authority on the universe.

1. Describing the powers that Allãh, *subhãnahu wa ta'ãla,* had given to Prophet 'Isa bin Maryam (a.s.), the Qur'ãn quotes him as follows:

> *"I make out of the clay the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a [real, living, flying] bird with Allãh's permission;*
>
> *I heal the blind and the leprous;*
>
> *and I bring the dead back to life with Allãh's permission;*
>
> *and I inform you of what you are eating and what you store in your houses..."* (3:48)

2. Describing the powers given to Prophet Sulaymãn, the Qur'ãn says:

"Then We made the wind subservient to him; it blew by his command gently to wherever he desired.

And (We also made subservient to him) the jinn: each (of them as) builder and diver, and others fettered in chains.

This is Our gift, therefore give freely or withhold, without reckoning. Most surely he had a nearness to Us and an excellent resort." (38:36-40) also (21:81-82)

3. Describing the power of Ãsif bin Barkhiya, the vizier of Prophet Sulaymãn, the Qur'ãn describes the scene of the moments before the Queen of Sheba and her entourage came to visit him:

"He (Sulaymãn) said, 'O Chiefs! which one of you can bring to me her (i.e., Queen of Sheba's) throne before they come to me in submission.'

One audacious among the jinn said, 'I will bring it to you before you rise from your place; and most surely I am strong and trustworthy for it.'

(But) one who had the knowledge of some of the Book said, 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' Then when he saw it (i.e., the throne) settled beside him, he said, 'This is the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful...'" (27:38-40)

In these three examples from the Qur'ãn, we see that Almighty Allãh had blessed some of his chosen servants with the power to breathe life to a shape of an animal, to bring the dead back to life, to cure the blind and the leprous, to subjugate the jinn for their work, to bring an item from far away in the twinkling of an eye, etc. These examples are sufficient to show that such powers can be given and have been given by Allãh to those whom He likes. It is this power that is referred to in Shí'a theology as "*al-wilãyah at-takwíniyya* - the power over the universe or the universal authority."

Allãh has given various ranks to the prophets and messengers (2:253 ; (17:55) , and all Muslims are unanimous in believing that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad al-Mustafa, is higher in rank than all the prophets and messengers.[101] All prophets and messengers had come to prepare their societies for the acceptance of the final and universal Messenger of God, Muhammad (s.a.w.). If prophets like Sulaymãn, Dãwud, 'Isa, and Musa, and also Sulaymãn's vizier, Ãsif, were blessed with powers over the nature, then it follows by necessity that Prophet Muhammad must have been blessed with greater power over the universe. Two examples have been clearly mentioned in the Qur'ãn. The ability of the Prophet of Islam to travel into space and

beyond with his human body (17:1 ; 53:5-18), and the parting of the moon by pointing towards it with his finger (54:1).[102]

Imam 'Ali and the other Imams of Ahlul Bayt are believed by the Shí'as to be higher in rank than all prophets and messengers except the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).[103] It follows as a necessity that they also have the powers that the Prophet had been blessed with by Almighty Allãh.

At this point, I will only refer to one verse from the holy Qur'ãn on this issue. During the early days in Mecca, when the idol worshippers were rejecting the claim of the Prophet, Allãh revealed a verse to console him by saying:

> *"And those who disbelieve say, 'You are not a messenger.' Say, 'Allãh is sufficient as a witness (between me and you) and the one who has knowledge of the Book.'"* (13:43)

Prophet Muhammad is being consoled that it doesn't matter if the idolaters do not believe in your claim; it is sufficent that Allãh and 'the one who has knowledge of the Book' are witnesses to the truth of your claim. Whom is Allãh referring to as a witness to the truth of the Prophet's claim? Who is this person 'who has knowledge of the Book'? According to Shí'í reports, supported by Sunni sources, it refers to 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib.[104] There was definitely no one among the companions of the Prophet who could claim that he had more knowledge about Islam than 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib.

How does the description "having knowledge of the Book" prove the universal authority for 'Ali? If you recall, Ãsif Barkhiya, Sulaymãn's vizier, had so much power over nature that he could bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba before the "twinkling of an eye". Ãsif has been described as someone who had "'ilmun *min* al-kitãb - knowledge of *a portion of* the Book," not "the knowledge of the entire Book." In comparison to this, Imam 'Ali has been described by Allãh as someone who had "*'ilmu 'l-kitãb* - knowledge of the Book," not just a portion of the Book. Therefore, it is not difficult to conclude that the power of Imam 'Ali over nature must be many degrees greater than that of Ãsif Barkhiya who brought the throne from far away before the "twinkling of an eye".

Again, as an important reminder, I must state that this belief is to be held in the vertical form vis-à-vis the power of Almighty Allãh, and only in that format can we preserve the concept of *tawhíd* in which Allãh is the Absolute Power and source of all power. It is to remind us of the total dependency of the chosen ones upon Allãh's will and power that He commands the Prophet to say, *"I do not control any benefit or harm for myself except as Allãh pleases."* (7:188) This is not a denial of having power; it is affirmation of the belief that whatever power he has is according to the

wish and pleasure of Almighty Allãh.

3. Wilãyat: Spiritual vs Political

The learned scholar's article in the *Bio-Ethics Encyclopaedia* (in which he wrote that the Prophet Muhammad "had left no explicit instruction regarding succession to his religious-political authority") generated heated discussion among the community. The responses that the learned scholar wrote to the community and the comments he subsequently made in the majlises of Muharram 1419 at Toronto, portray the confusion about the concept of *wilãyat*.

(a) "*Spiritual Only, Not Political*"

First the learned scholar claimed that the *wilãyat* of the Prophet and the Imams was only spiritual and not political. He said:

> "By the way, the Prophet (s.a.w.) was never recognized as the political leader. No, that is not correct at all. He was recognized as Rasululah, the envoy of God, the Messenger of Allãh (s.t.). There was no politics, there was no political language attached to it. It isn't that what the moderns are telling us; the way Iran is telling us time and again that the Prophet was a political leader. No. He was recognized fundamentally and essentially as a prophet of God.[105]
>
> "Task of prophethood was to lead the society to perfection. And that perfection could not be done individually - it had to be done as members of the community, the ummah. Ummah means a community under the Prophet as prophet, not a political leader.
>
> "Now we know why *'man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha 'Aliyun mawlahu'* meant something very very important. The Prophet (s.a.w.) could have said, *'man kuntu khalifa fa hadha khalifa'*. He could have said, *'man kuntu hakiman fa hadha hakiman.'* He is not using any of the terminology that we would use in the normal political sense of carrying on the authority of the political leader...
>
> "Look at the word chosen by Allãh (s.t.) for guidance. After all the Prophet is '*ma yantiqu 'anil hawaa in huwa illa wahyun yuhaa*.' He is given instructions. '*Mawla'*: what does the word 'mawla' mean? Allãh (s.t.) says in the Qur'ãn *'wal kafirun laysa lahum mawla.'* The disbeliever has no *mawla.* They don't have a *mawla* - they don't have a protector, they don't have a patron, they don't have somebody who cares for them. This is the meaning of *mawla*..."[106]

The learned scholar says that *nubuwwat* did not include political leadership, and that

the word *mawla* used by the Prophet in Ghadir did not mean *khalifa* (political successor) or *hãkim* (ruler). In other words, he is excluding the third dimension of wilãyat from the term "mawla" and restricting it to the second dimension (i.e., spiritual guidance). In his attempt to convince his audience, he makes up hypothetical and grammatically incorrect Arabic sentences which make no sense. For example, the sentence "*man kuntu [lahu] khalifa fa hadha [lahu] khalifa* - for whomsoever I am his successor, this is his successor." Was the Prophet "*khalifa*-successor" of any one from the audience? Of course, not; and that is why he did not use the term "khalifa" in the hadíth of Ghadir.

As discussed in one of the previous chapters, to understand the meaning of *"mawla"* as used by the Prophet for Imam 'Ali, one does not have to go far. Just ponder upon the question he asked the Muslims before presenting 'Ali as their *"mawla"*: he asked them, "Do I not have more authority over you then you have over yourselves? *A lastu awla bi kum min anfusi kum?*"[107] When they replied by saying, "Certainly, O Messenger of Allãh," then he said, "*Man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha 'Aliyun mawlahu* - Of whomsoever I am the master, this 'Ali is his master." Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is surely talking about a master who has more authority *(awla)* over the people than they have over themselves, and that includes authority in political matters also. And, therefore, there was no need for the Prophet to say, *'Man kuntu ['alayhi] hãkiman, fa hadha ['alayhi] hãkiman.'*

The learned scholar continues his talk:

> "The Prophet (s.a.w.) when he introduces Imam 'Ali's authority in the community, what does he say? *'Man kuntu mawlahu fa hadha 'Aliyun mawlahu.'* What he means is that 'whoever regards me as a perfect example to be followed to the ultimate goal of salvation, 'Ali is the man who should be followed.' The question was of obedience. *Mawla*, one who should be obeyed, one who should not be disregarded. In that sense, Allãh is *Mawla*. Allãh is the *Mawla* of *deen*, that path on which you cannot afford to disobey Allãh (s.w.t.)..."[108]

Is this following and obedience restricted to spiritual matters and does it not include social-political issues?

The Hadíth of 'Abdullãh bin Mas'ûd

In order to prove his point that the declaration of Ghadir was not explicit enough to convey the meaning of "khilãfat" in the sense of political succession, the learned scholar says:

> "The Prophet never forced. After he returned to Medina from Ghadir; one night he was home with 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud. He tells 'Abdullah that the messenger has come and wants me to go; that I have received the news of my death. 'Abdullah says, *by the way this is after Ghadir,* 'Appoint a successor.' Yes, this exactly what he said. 'Why don't you appoint Abu Bakr?' The Prophet shakes his head and says, no. He mentions one after the other. (I don't know about the value of this hadith; Shaykh Mufid mentions it and I am mentioning it on the authority of Shaykh Mufid. I am not here to examine and judge how authentic is the hadith. But I am telling you it reflects the situation in the community. If it is authentic, it reflects the situation in the community...[109]) 'Abdullah's hadith goes; and the Prophet is asking, 'What shall I do?' 'Abdullah says, 'Why don't you appoint 'Umar; why don't you appoint 'Uthman?' And finally, 'Abdullah says, 'Why don't you appoint 'Ali?' And the Prophet says, and he is weak by this time, 'O I wish, they would obey. I wish they would obey.'"[110]

First, this conversation between the Prophet and 'Abdullãh ibn Mas'úd did not take place in Medina after the declaration of Ghadir as the learned scholar wants the audience to believe ("by the way, this is after Ghadir"). In the beginning of his narration, 'Abdullãh says, "We went out with the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.) the night of the delegation of jinn until we [reached and] stayed at 'Ula." 'Ula is a place where the Prophet had stopped on his way to Tabûk.[111]

Secondly, the event related to the delegation of jinn occurred when the Prophet was on his way to Tabûk in the year 9 A.H.[112] And the event of Ghadir Khumm took place in 10 A.H.

Thirdly, according to the methodology of the Western scholars, would not the sequence in the names suggested by 'Abdullãh ibn Mas'ûd itself be an indication that this 'hadíth' was a later fabrication? Why is the Western scholarship so quick in rejecting the ahãdíth quoted by the Shí'as that have the names of the Imams in proper sequence but not treat such hadíth of the Sunnis with equal scepticism? I know an easy response will be that "I said that 'I don't know the value of the hadíth...'" My only question is: Why confuse the people and create doubt in the explicitness of the Prophet's declaration in Ghadir by quoting such a hadíth irresponsibly?

Then on such a flimsy basis, the learned scholar concludes by saying:

> "So apparently, *there was a big question of the religious role that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was playing in the community.* The community saw itself organized under the leadership of the Prophet (s.a.w.). When he was gone, someone

> had to replace him in the same position-in the same authority. And this is where today we are *still* searching for the interpretation."

Al-hamdu lil lãh, the true followers of the Prophet understood the real interpretation in Ghadír Khumm itself; and may Almighty Allãh help those who are still searching for the true interpretation of the term *"mawla"* and the status of *"wali-ul-lãh"*.

The Meaning of "Imamate"

In the same speech, the learned scholar further explains the meaning of Imamate by saying:

> "The belief system says anybody who had any right to claim obedience after the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) is 'Ali bin Abi Talib. That is the meaning of Imamate; it is nothing more than that. You open any book of *kalãm*, you will find theologians describing Imam 'Ali as having the right to become *mutã'*, obeyed, one should be obeyed by the people. Why should he be obeyed? Because he is exactly sitting in the place of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)...
>
> "Imam 'Ali was the Imam from the day the Prophet Muhammad closed his eyes. Regardless whether he became a khalifa or not. How can he become an Imam without becoming a khalifa, without sitting on the throne? That was not the requirement. Because the obedience was to the position of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.)."

In order to defend his writing in the *Bio Ethics Encyclopaedia*, the learned scholar has divided "imamate" and "khilãfat" into two different realms: "imãmate" becomes a spiritual position while "khilãfat" becomes a political position. He says, "Imamate is nothing more than that", and even boldly asks the audience to "open any book of *kalãm* [theology]..."

Well, we opened the books of *kalãm* from different eras and found the statement of the learned scholar to be against the mainstream Shi'a belief on the meaning and scope of "imãmate".

Shaykh Mufid (d. 413 A.H./1022 C.E.) defines an "Imam" as follows: "The Imam is the person who has the comprehensive leadership in religious **as well as worldly matters** as the successor of the Prophet (a.s.)."[113]

'Allãma Hilli (d. 726 A.H./1325 C.E.) defines "Imamate" as follows: "The Imamate is a **universal authority** *(riyãsa)* in the things of religion and **of the world** belonging to some person and derived from *(niyãba)* the Prophet."[114]

'Abdu 'r-Razzãq Lãhíji (d. 1072 A.H.) defines "Imamate" as follows: "Know that Imamate is an authority over all those who are of legal age in **worldly** as well as religious matter based on successorship of the Prophet."[115]

'Allãmah Tabãtabã'í (d. 1401 A.H. / 1981) writes, "Thus the imamate and religious leadership in Islam may be studied from three different perspectives: from the perspective of Islamic government, of Islamic sciences and injunctions, and of leadership and innovative guidance in the spiritual life. Shí'ism believes that since Islamic society is in dire need of guidance in each of these three aspects, the person who occupies the function of giving that guidance and is the leader of the community in these areas of religious concern must be appointed by God and the Prophet."[116] Even Murtaza Mutahhari states that when the Shí'as use the term "Imam", it does not only reflect the spiritual guidance and leadership, it includes the social and political leadership also.[117]

As you can see, all these theologians and prominent scholars of the Shí'a faith unanimously define Imamate as a position that combines the spiritual/religious leadership as well as the socio-political/wordly leadership. For a Shí'a, 'Ali is the first Imam as well as the first khalifa of the Prophet. A Shí'a would never say that 'Ali is the first Imam but not the *khalifa bila fasl* (immediate successor) of the Prophet. The difference between Shí'as and the Sunnis is not about the spiritual leadership; it is on the socio-political leadership *immediately after* the Prophet. As mentioned earlier, the view that the Ahlul Bayt were "spiritual guides only but not political leaders" is a belief found among the Sunnis in general and the Sufis in particular.[118]

(b) *"Political Also"*

Then in the 6th speech of Muharram 1419, the learned scholar, in a way, contradicts his above statement. He says:

> "...The fact remains that the Qur'àn conceived the Prophet to be the leader of an *ummah,* an *ummah* that was religious, social and political. In other words, it was civil, moral community that was being guided by a person, who had some kind of comprehensive authority, which was not conceivable at that time even, by the Arab tribes. That was also the difficulty during Ghadir. When Ghadir happened, one of the challenging dimensions of Ghadir was an introduction of the Qur'anic concept of leadership. *Wilayah* means that kind of leadership, which combines the civil and moral authority in one person. That means there is no separation of power. This is no church and state as such, rather the civil and moral authority combines in the person who holds the office of the wilayah. What was new about it? The new thing about it was this that in the

> Arab culture, the Arabs were never used to see a young person assuming the leadership. In Arab culture it was impossible for a thirty year old young man to become a leader because the Arabs believed that an older person has to become a leader..."[119]

Again in the 8th speech, the learned scholar says:

> "The whole question is 'Is Islam a political system or it's a religious system?' There are two opinions about it. Many scholars are fighting the battle, including Ayatullah Khui, Ayatullah Mutahhari, Ayatullah Khumayni, in Egypt, al-Ashmaawi, al-Jaabiri in Morocco...For me there is a very important issue involved here. If we say that Islam is not a political system, and Islam is simply a religion that is concerned with moving humanity towards self-perfection and prepare humanity for the hereafter, then we are denying a very major role played by the Prophet in the establishment of the *ummah* itself...
>
> "Nine-tenth of Islam is *mu'amalat,* how you deal with each other, how you conduct your affairs in this world because whatever you do in this world has an implication for the aakhirat. Now in that kind of religion, to say that Islam is simply a religion without any social system is to deny the fact of *wilayah*. By the way, if you remember my lecture on the fifth night because *wilayah* means moral, civil authority that can lead you to your ultimate goal of creation, and 'ultimate goal of creation' is not only knowing what is five times a day prayers, fasting, but knowing how to live as human beings in a society. Otherwise there would not be civil authority, the Prophet could just be what we call *an-nabi ar-ruhi*..."[120]

This is indeed true. Why then did the learned scholar say in the 2nd speech, "The Prophet was never recognized as the political leader"? It is good that he made it clear that the Prophet was not only a religious leader, he was also a political leader. After WWI, there was an intense debate in Egypt on Westernization versus Islam, and some intellectuals, influenced by Western ideas, tried to secularize Islam by restricting khilãfat to spiritual issues and separting it from the ummah's political system. 'Ali 'Abdu 'r-Rãziq wrote *al-Islam wa Usûlu 'l-Hukm* (1925) proposing the complete separation of religion and state in Islam.[121] Similar ideas are resurfacing lately in the writings of some Muslim intellectuals influenced by the liberal/secular ideas of the West.

4. Do Najaf & Qum Have Different Views on The Role of the Imams?

Then in the 9th speech, the learned scholar again dwells upon the spiritual *vs* political role of the Prophet and the Imams. And now surprisingly he claims that even great

scholars of Qum and Najaf have different views. He says:

> "...Najaf and Qum are divided on the whole debate about the Prophet's political role. Najaf as one of the most important centres of Shi'a learning, and Qum, now the most important centre of Shi'a learning have maintained two different views about the role of the Imam...Najaf has maintained a conservative attitude to the role of the Imam. They believe that religion has a moral function, an ethical function but not a political one, including Ayatullah Khui, whose opinions are well stated. He does not believe that the *wilayah* of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib (a.s.) has any need for manifesting itself politically because the Imam remains the Imam as a spiritual, moral, ethical leader regardless whether people pay allegiance to him or not. That opinion was for the first time contested by Ayatullah Khumayni himself."[122]

The learned scholar wants to leave the impression in the minds of his listeners that even the *'ulama* of Qum and Najaf had different opinions concerning the role of the Imam in the sense that Najaf confines it to a spiritual realm whereas Qum expands it to encompass a political sphere as well.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Shí'a 'ulamã' of Najaf (exemplified by the late al-Khu'i) and Qum (exemplified by the late al-Khumayni) have identical views about the *wilãyat* of the Prophet and the Imams. The difference between them is not about the *wilãyat* of the Imams, it is about the extent of the *wilãyat-e faqih,* the authority of a jurist. Moreover, on the issue of *wilãyat-e faqih,* the division is not between Qum and Najaf; there are 'ulamã' on both sides of the issue in Qum as well as in Najaf.

As discussed earlier, all four dimensions of wilãyat for the Prophet and the Imams are among the *dharûriyyãt al-madhhab* (the essentials of Shí'a faith), so how could such great leaders of the Shí'a world have differences on them?

As for the views of the late Ayatullah al-Khumayni on the *wilãyat* of the Prophet and his Ahlul Bayt, I quote from his lecture on *wilãyat-e faqíh*. He says:

> "To prove that government and authority belong to the Imam is not to imply that the Imam has no spiritual status. The Imam does indeed possess certain spiritual dimensions that are unconnected with his function as ruler. The spiritual status of the Imam is the universal divine viceregency that is sometimes mentioned by the Imams (peace be upon them). It is a viceregency pertaining to the whole of creation, by virtue of which all the atoms in the universe humble themselves before the holder of authority. It is one of the essential beliefs of our Shí'i school that no one can attain the spiritual status of

> the Imams, not even the cherubim or the prophets. In fact, according to the traditions that have been handed down to us, the Most Noble Messenger and the Imams existed before the creation of the world in the form of lights situated beneath the divine throne; they were superior to other men even in the sperm from which they grew and in their physical composition. Their exalted station is limited only by the divine will, as indicated by the saying of Jibra'il recorded in the traditions on the *mi'rãj:* 'Were I to draw closer by as much as the breadth of a finger, surely I would burn.'"[123]

Ayatullah al-Khumayni, while affirming the political leadership of the Prophet and the Imams, does not deny or "de-mystify" their universal wilãyat.

Coming to the views of the late Ayatullah al-Khu'i on the *wilãyat* of the Prophet and the Ahlul Bayt, I quote from the transcripe of his lectures in which he says:

> "As for the first type of *wilãyat* [*takviniya,* universal], obviously there is no doubt in their authority over the entire creation as is clear from the ahãdíth because they are the link in creation, through them [continues] the existence, and they are reason for creation [of the universe]; if it had not been for them, Allãh would not have created the people altogether, the people have been created for them, through them the people exist, and they are the means of the pouring forth [of the Divine grace].
>
> "Actually, they have the universal authority just below that of the Creator Himself; this authority [of theirs] is like the authority of Almighty Allãh on the creation, however, it is weaker compared to the authority of Almighty Allãh on the creation."[124]

Then al-Khû'í also talks about the civil/political authority of the Prophet and the Imams, and says,

> "As for the second dimension of their legislative wilãyat *(at-tashrí'iyya)* in the sense that they possess the authority to independently administer the properties and the lives of the people-obviously, there is no dispute on their authority of this kind...This is proven from well attested ahãdíth, and in the farewell sermon [the Prophet said], 'Whomsoever's master I am, this 'Ali is his master. Do I not have more authority over the believers than they have themselves?' They said, 'Yes.'..."[125]

Ayatullãh al-Khû'í, while affirming the universal wilãyat of the Prophet and the Imams, does not deny their political authority. Actually, he goes further to say that,

"And the presumption that the history is contrary to that [in the sense that the Imams did not historically exercise their political authority]...is invalid."

Thus he concludes,

"So not exercising [the authority in the historical sense] does not prove the non-existence of the authority as is obvious."[126]

In essence, the two great jurists of the contemporary Shí'a world representing Qum and Najaf have identical views about the *wilãyat* of the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.). They both believe in all dimensions of *wilãyat* -spiritual, socio-political, and universal- of the Prophet and the Imams. The difference that existed between the two was only on the limits of the authority of a *faqih* (mujtahid, jurist) during the Occultation of the Present Imam (a.s.). How could the learned scholar, who has written *The Just Ruler* on the authority of the jurist, not know the difference between *wilãyat* of the Imams (unanimously accepted by the Shí'a jurists) and the *wilãyat* of the *faqíh* (with dispute over its limits among the Shí'a jurists)?

5. Is Not Wilãyat Part of the Faith?

Referring to the controversy surrounding his article in the *Bio Ethics Encyclopeadia,* the learned scholar made the following comment in his 4th speech of Muharram 1419:

"How can such a thing divide the community when it is such a trivial part, and it is not even part of the faith."

Referring to the event of Ghadír Khumm, he says: "That historical event: what does it have any connection with our belief system? So if I said in my article that the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not leave any explicit instruction about his successor, am I treading the path which is dangerous to the survival of the religion of the Ahlul Bayt? Or am exercising my right as a researcher to see what the documents say?"

Is the issue of *wilãyat* and imamate a "trivial part" and "not even part of the faith"?

As we have explained earlier in this chapter, in Islam there is a term called "*dharûriy*, pl. *dharûriyyãt*" which refers to those issues that are essential parts of our religion. The *"dharûriyyãt"* are divided into two: "*dharûriyyãt ad-dín* - the essential parts of the Islamic faith" and "*dharûriyyãt al-madhhab* - the essential parts of the Shí'a sect". It is a common view of our scholars that whoever rejects one of the *dharûriyyãt ad-dín,* then he is no longer considered a member of the Islamic faith; and whoever rejects one of the *dharûriyyãt al-madhhab,* then he is no longer considered a member of the

Shí'a Ithnã-'Ashari sect.

What is the status of the belief in the *wilãyat* of the Ahlul Bayt: is it one of the *dharûriyyãt* or not? While discussing the status of the Muslims who are not Shí'a, Ayatullãh al-Khu'i has defined *wilãyat* (in the sense of love for the Ahlul Bayt) as one of the *dharûriyyãt ad-dín,* and *wilãyat* (in the sense of khilãfat and political leadership) as one of the *dharûriyyãt al-madhhab*. The late Ayatullah says:

> "The dimension of *wilãyat* that is essential [for *dín*] is the *wilãyat* in the meaning of love and devotion, and they [the Sunnis] do not deny it in this sense rather they actually express their love for the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.)...
>
> "Of course, the *wilãyat* in the meaning of succession (khilãfat) is one of the essential parts of the *madhhab* [of Shí'ism], but not from the essential parts of the *dín*."[127]

So according to Ayatullah al-Khu'i, the *wilãyat* and *imãmate* in the meaning of succession (*khilãfat*) is an essential part (*dharûriy*) of Shí'ism; anyone who rejects this dimension of the *wilãyat* would not be considered as a Shí'a. He would still be a Muslim but not a Shí'a.

As for the question that by denying the explicitness of the appointment of Imam 'Ali (a. s.), is the learned scholar "treading the path which is dangerous to the survival of the religion of the Ahlul Bayt?"

Well, the religion of the Ahlul Bayt will surely survive because it has an Imam protecting it even though he is in Occultation; but such statements will surely weaken the faith of our common people and youths in the explicit *wilãyat* of the Imams. You have to see where such a statement will lead: it minimises the wrong done against the Ahlul Bayt and it gives a semblance of legitimacy to Sunni view of khilãfat. A Sunni would extend this argument further that since the Prophet had not made things clear enough, the companions did what they thought was best for Islam! A Shi'a who had attended speeches of the learned scholar was saying that 'what is the problem if we believe that 'Ali is the first Imam (in the spiritual sense) and the fourth caliph (in the socio-political sense)!' With such friends we do not need an enemy.

6. The Final Correction

Just before he came to Toronto in 1998 for Muharram (1419), the learned scholar sent the following correction to the publishers of the *Bio-Ethics Encyclopaedia*:

> "Muhammad died in 632 C.E., having brought the whole of Arabia under the

> Medina government. However, although he had explicitly designated his cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali, to succeed him, he had left no written guidelines about the political process."

This he had faxed to some members of our community in Toronto and had also mentioned in one of his speeches in Muharram 1419.

We have the following comments regarding the correction: Firstly, even his correction is problematic. The learned scholar has tried to divide the succession into two: religious and political. On the issue of religious succession, he writes that the Prophet explicitly designated 'Ali to succeed him. Then he immediately qualifies the explicit designation and excludes political succession from it by writing, "he left no written guidelines on the political process." In the 4th speech of Muharram 1419, he says: "Yes, al-Ghadir is an explicit *designation*, it does not mean explicit *instruction* about the political process. No history supports that."

Since when did "written guidelines" become important in establishing Islamic teachings? Is not the entire structure of Islamic system based on spoken words: the Qur'ãn and the sunnah? There is absolutely no "written" guidelines left by the Prophet for anything at all, so why create a new cushion for the Sunnis in their defence against the Shí'as by expecting a "written" guideline on the issue of caliphate? What about all the sayings of the Prophet on the appointment of Imam 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (a.s.) as his caliph?

Would the value of the Prophet's "spoken" guidelines be less than the "written" guidelines? Is disobeying his "spoken" guidelines less severe than his "written" guidelines? Almighty Allãh says,

> *"O you who believe! Do not raise your voices over the voice of the Prophet..."* (49:2)

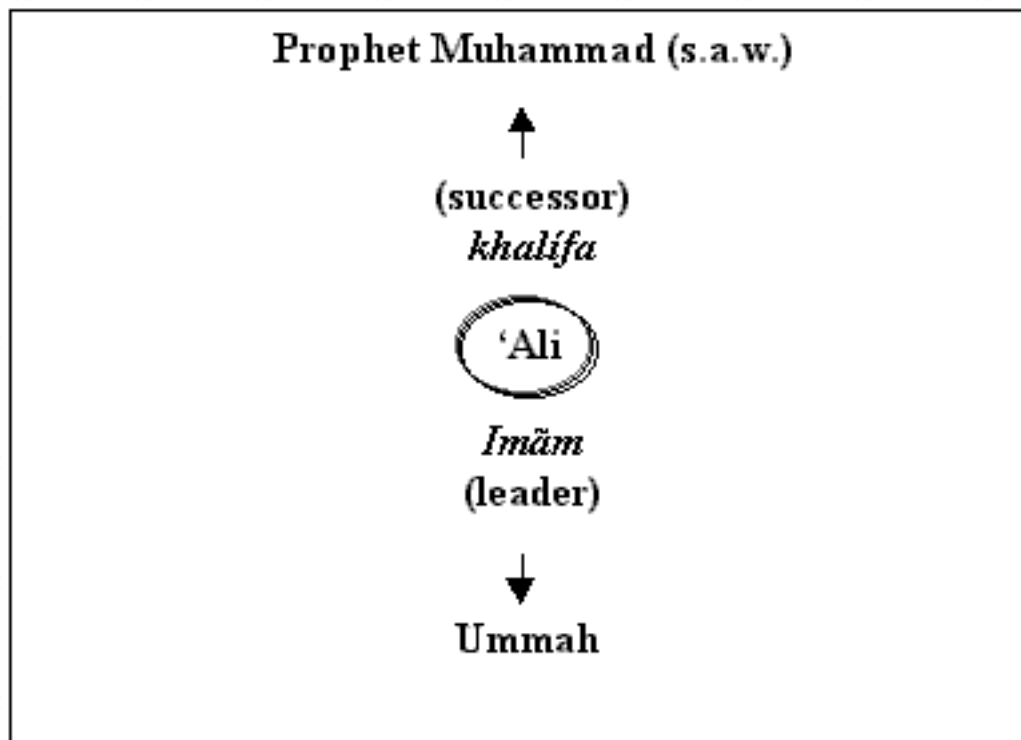
If the learned scholar wanted to mention the story of Qirtãs in which the Prophet asked for a pen and paper, then he should have written the whole story and pointed out the person responsible for not letting the Prophet leave anything in writing.

Secondly, the play with words like "designation" and "instruction" is disturbing. In Ghadír, the Prophet talks about his approaching death and then gets an acknowledgement from the Muslims about the level of his authority over them, and then he declares that "Whosoever's master am I, this 'Ali is master." Then he says that "I am leaving two things behind: the Book of Allãh and my Progeny, as long as you hold fast to them both, you will not go astray." And then he instructs the companions to come and greet Imam 'Ali (a.s.) by addressing him as the "Amir -

Leader". When you see the whole context of the event of Ghadir, is it not a clear instruction, designation, indication, inclination, appointment -or what you would like to call it- for the leadership of Imam 'Ali after the death of the Prophet?

To believe that the Prophet did not leave explicit instructions about his political successor gives semblance of legitimacy to the Sunni caliphate. If the Prophet had not clearly said anything about this matter, then how can the Shí'as claim that Sunni caliphs usurped the right of 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (a.s.)? Such a statement helps no one but the Sunnis.

Thirdly, in light of the learned scholar's statement, one can say that 'Ali is the "Imam" (religious/spiritual successor) but not the "Caliph" (political successor)! I do not know what the learned scholar would say about the declaration of the Prophet in Da'wat Dhul 'Ashira that 'Ali is "my successor - *khalifati*".

In Shi'a theology, as mentioned earlier, there is no difference between "imamate" and "khilafat". The implication of these two titles is simple: 'Ali, in relation to the Prophet, is his khalifa and successor; and 'Ali, in relation to the ummah, is their Imam and leader. So defining "imamate" as a religious succession and "khilafat" as a political succession goes against the implications of "Imam" and "Khalifa". 'Ali is the Imam of the Muslim ummah in religious as well as political matters, and likewise 'Ali is the Khalifa of the Prophet in religious as well as political matters. Being wrongfully deprived of his political position does not diminish the reality of the truth. In the words of Sayyid al-Khû'í, "Not exercising [the authority] does not prove non-existence of the *wilãyat*."

Division of leadership into religious and political has actually happened in the Sunni version of Muslim history. The first four caliphs assumed the political and the religious leadership which is why that era is described as "*al-khilãfatu 'r-rãshida* - the rightly guided caliphate". After that, the caliphs assumed the political leadership but the religious leadership was assumed by others. In jurisprudence *(fiqh),* for example, the four Imams emerged as the leaders even while there were caliphs who ruled in their times. In theology, Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansûr al-Mãturidi emerged as the leader. In spiritualism, various masters (and even some Shí'a Imams) were accepted as guides and leaders by Sufi orders.

The Shí'as did not subscribe to the division of leadership in political and religious realms; the Imams are their ultimate guides and leaders in all spheres of life: religious and political, legal and theological. Therefore, Imam Ja'far as-Sãdiq (a.s.) for example, is not just a legal guide for the Shí'as, he is their ultimate leader in the fullest sense of the word, even if some dimensions of his leadership was not manifest.

* * *

[91] See, Murtaza Mutahhari, Wilãyah: the Station of the Master (Walã' hã wa wilãyat hã), tr. Yahya Cooper, Tehran: World Organisation for Islamic Services, 1982.

[Also see Master and Mastership]

[92] Salãwãt means praying for Allãh's blessings on Prophet Muhammad and his Ahlul Bayt. This is included in the daily ritual prayers by all Muslims.

[93] An authentic and sahíh hadíth narrated by an-Nasã'í, Khasã'is Amiri 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib (Beirut: Daru 'l-Kitãb, 1987) p. 101-102; the annotator, al-Athari, has given many more quotations like Sahíh of Muslim, Sahíh of at-Tirmidhi, and others.

[94] Narrated by Ahmad bin Hanbal and at-Tirmidhi, both in the section of al-manãqib, as quoted in Muhibbu 'd-Dín at-Tabari, Dhakhã'iru 'l-'Uqba fi Manãqib Dhawi 'l-Qurba, ed. Akram al-Bushi (Jeddah: Maktabatu 's-Sahãba, 1995) p. 165.

[95] On the rejection of the dharûriyyãt, see al-Majlisi, "Risãlah fi 'l-I'tiqãdãt," Manãhiju 'l-Haqq wa 'n-Najãt, ed. Sayyid Hasan Bani Tabã (Qum: Markaz-e Ãthãr Shí'a, 1372 solar AH) p. 308-309; Sayyid Muhammad Kãdhim al-Yazdi, al-'Urwatu 'l-Wuthqa (Tehran: Dãr al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, 1392) p. 24.

[96] As-Sadûq, I'tiqãdãtu 'l-Imãmiyya, p. 94; in its English translation, The Shi'ite Creed, see p. 85. Also see any standard text on Shí'a jurisprudence in the section on "najãsãt" under "kãfir".

[97] As quoted by the late 'Allãmah Mir Hãmid Husayn al-Musawi who then refutes it to prove the universal Imamate of Imam 'Ali through hadíth of Ghadír. See al-Milãni, Nafahãtu 'l-Azhar fi Khulãsati 'Abaqãti 'l-Anwãr, vol. 9 (Beirut: Dãru 'l-Mu'arrikhi 'l-'Arabi, 1995) p. 311.

[98] Sayyid Hussain Nasr, "Shí'ism and Sufism," p. 103.

[99] See Mutahhari, Wilãyah, p. 72; also see Mutahhari's Imãmat wa Rahbari, p. 163 as quoted by our teacher Sayyid Muhsin al-Kharrãzi, Bidãyatu 'l-Ma'ãrifi 'l-Ilãhiyya vol. 2, p. 12-16.

[100] The full quotation will come later on in this chapter.

[101] As-Sadûq, I'tiqãdãt, p. 92-93; in its English translation, The Shi'ite Creed, p. 84-85; al-Majlisi, "Risãla fi 'l-I'tiqãdãt," p. 310.

[102] On parting of the moon, see in Shí'a sources, at-Tabrasi, Majma'u 'l-Bayãn, vol. 5, p. 186; at-Tabãtabã'í, al-Mizãn fi Tafsíri 'l-Qur'ãn, vol. 19, p. 60-72 who also refutes the objections raised by the materialist minded Muslims who like to interpret all such verses in metaphorical sense. In Sunni sources, see al-Fakhr ar-Rãzi, at-Tafsíru 'l-Kabír, vol. 15, p. 26; as-Suyûti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthûr, vol. 6, p. 133; Mawdûdi, Tafhímu 'l-Qur'ãn, vol. 5, p. 230-231.

[103] As-Sadûq, I'tiqãdãt, p. 92-93; in its English translation, The Shi'ite Creed, p. 84-85; al-Majlisi, "Risãla fi 'l-I'tiqãdãt," p. 310.

[104] Among Sunni references, see Ibn al-Maghãzili ash-Shãfi'í, Manãqib al-Imam 'Ali bin Abí Tãlib, p. 313 (hadíth # 358); as-Suyûti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthûr, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.) p. 669; al-Qandûzi, Yanãbí'u 'l-Muwaddah (Beirut:, 1390/1970) p. 121. For further references, see ash-Shahíd at-Tustari, Ihqãqu 'l-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 280, vol. 14, p. 362-365, vol. 20, p. 75-77. For a critical review of the counter reports cited by some Sunni scholars, see at-Tabãtabã'í, al-Mizãn, vol. 11, p. 423-428.

[105] This is again an example of saying one thing in his academic work and saying something else when talking to the Shí'a community. Dr. Sachedina, as mentioned earlier, has written in Islamic Messianism that Islam began as a political movement and later on acquired religious emphasis; now he is saying that the Prophet was

recognized fundamentally as a prophet of God and was never recognized as a political leader.

[106] Dr. Sachedina's 2nd speech of Muharram 1419 in Toronto. He has inadvertently quoted the Qur'ãnic verse incorrectly, it is not 'wal kãfirun laysa lahum mawla', it is 'wa anna 'l-kãfirín la mawla lahum.' (47:11)

[107] This question of the Prophet is based on the verse 33:6 of the Qur'ãn.

[108] 2nd speech in Toronto, Muharram 1419.

[109] Although this sentence is cushioned in "if it is authentic" escape clause, it creates more questions: During the last days of Ramadhãn 1418, Dr. Sachedina made the following declaration on the Internet: "I am taking this opportunity to state in the most ABSOLUTE terms that not only do I believe in the unequivocal authenticity of the event of al-Ghadir..., I believe that the statement by the Prophet 'Everyone whose master I am, also has 'Ali as a master,' to be the explicit designation of the Imam 'Ali to the office of the Leadership of Muslim Community, as upheld by the Twelver Shí'a faith." Then less than four months later, in Muharram 1419, he makes such statements that cast doubt in the explicitness of the declaration of Ghadir Khumm.

[110] The 2nd speech of Muharram 1419 at Toronto.

[111] At-Turayhi, al-Majma'u 'l-Bahrayn, ed. Mahmûd 'Ãdil, vol. 3 (Tehran: Daftar-e Nashr-e Farhang-e Islami, 1408) p. 242.

[112] Al-Mufíd, Ãmãli, vol. 13 (Musannafãt Shaykh al-Mufíd) p. 35.

[113] Al-Mufid, an-Nukatu 'l-I'tiqãdiyya in vol. 10 of Musannafãt ash-Shaykh al-Mufid (Qum: Mu'assasa Ãli 'l-Bayt, 1413 AH) p. 39.

[114] Al-Hilli, al-Bãbu 'l-Hãdi 'Ashar [Qum: Nashr Nawid, 1368 AH solar] p. 184; also see its English translation A Treatise on the Principles of Shí'ite Thought, tr. William Miller (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1958) p. 62.

[115] Lahíji, Sarmãya-e Imãn (Qum: Intishãrãt-e az-Zahra, 1372 AH solar) p. 107.

[116] Tabãtabã'í, Shí'a Islam, tr. Nasr (Qum: Ansariyan, 1989) p. 173.

[117] Mutahhari, Wilãya, p. 72.

[118] See p. 90-91.

[119] In the 6th speech in Muharram 1419 at Toronto.

[120] In the 8th speech in Muharram 1419 at Toronto.

[121] On 'Abdu 'r-Rãziq's book and al-Bakhit's reponse to it, see Hourani, Arabic Thought, pp. 184-192; on Rashid Radha's response, see Kerr, Islamic Reform, pp. 179-185.

[122] The 9th speech in Muharram 1419 in Toronto.

[123] Khomeini, Islam and Revolution, tr. Hamid Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981) p. 64-65.

[124] At-Tawhidi, Muhammad 'Ali, Misbãhu 'l-Faqãhah, vol. 5 (Qum: Intishãrat-e Wijdani, 1368 A.H. solar) p. 35.

[125] Ibid, p. 38-39.

[126] Ibid, p. 39.

[127] Al-Gharawi, Mirza 'Ali, at-Tanqíh fi Sharhi 'l-'Urwati 'l-Wuthqa, vol. 2 (Qum: Dar al-Hadi, 1410 AH) p. 86.

Knowledge of the Ahlul Bayt

1. Introduction

The universal *wilãyat* is in a way linked to the knowledge that Almighty Allãh has bestowed upon the person holding the *wilãyat*. The universal *wilãyat* of Imam 'Ali, for example, is described in the Qur'ãn by the words "the person who has knowledge of the Book."

What is *'ilmu 'l-ghayb?* Our means of gaining knowledge are through the senses that Allãh has created in us. *"And Allãh brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers while you did not know anything; and He made for you the ears, the eyes, and the hearts (i.e., minds) so that haply you may be thankful."* (16:78) We see things through our eyes and listen to sounds by our ears, and then we analyze the information in our minds and deduce the conclusion.

There is another kind of knowledge that cannot be acquired by human senses; it comes from God. That knowledge is known as *'ilmu 'l-ghayb,* knowledge of the unseen. For example, knowledge about the future events or the inner thoughts and intentions of a person, etc.

"*Ghayb*" is the opposite of "*shuhûd* - the present, the seen". Sometimes the *ghayb* is absolute (e.g., the inner most intentions of a person) and at other times it is relative (e.g., what a person has hidden inside his house, it is 'unseen' for outsiders). The term "*ghayb*-unseen, hidden" is used from the perspective of the created beings only. For Allãh there is no difference between *ghayb* and *shuhûd*. The Qur'ãn describes Allãh as: *"...Knower of the unseen and the seen..."* (39:46 ; 62:8)

2. The Qur'ãn & 'Ilmu 'l-Ghayb

According to the Qur'ãn, the only independent source of *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* is Allãh.

> *"And with Him are the keys of the ghayb, no one knows it except Him..."* (6:59)
>
> *"Say, 'Those who are in the heavens and the earth do not know the ghayb except Allãh."* (27:65)
>
> *"And to Allãh belongs the ghayb of the heavens and the earth."* (7:49 ; 18:26)

The import of these verses is that the knowledge of *ghayb* belongs to Allãh, He

knows the *ghayb* by Himself.

Can anyone else have access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb?* Almighty Allãh, out of His infinite grace and wisdom, bestows the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* upon whomsoever He chooses. The Qur'ãn says:

> *"(My Lord) knows the ghayb and He does not expose His ghayb to anyone **except** to one with whom He is pleased from the messenger..."* (72:26-27)

> *"...And Allãh is not about to inform you about the ghayb, **but** Allãh chooses from His messengers whomsoever He pleases [for the ghayb]."* (3:179)

> *"He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge **except** what He pleases."* (2:255)

The import of these verses is that Allãh bestows 'ilmu 'l-ghayb to some created beings.

When you put all the verses about the knowledge of the unseen together, you get the overall conclusion that (1) Allãh is the only original and independent possesser of *'ilumu 'l-ghayb,* and that (2) whosoever from the angels, prophets, messengers, Imams and other virtuous persons that have *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* is totally dependent on Allãh's discretion and power.[128]

After commenting on the last verses of surah 72, 'Allãmah at-Tabãtabã'í reaches the following conclusion:

> "The exclusive possession of the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* by Almighty Allãh is in the sense of originality that we have explained, and so He, the Almighty, knows the *ghayb* by Himself while the others know the *ghayb* by Him informing them about it. And so it becomes clear that what has been mentioned in His words about others not having the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* actually means 'not having it by themselves and independently,' it does not deny what others know [of the ghayb] through revelation..."[129]

3. 'Ilmu 'l-Ghayb of the Prophets

The Qur'ãn not only talks about the possibility of others having access to the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb,* it actually gives various examples of those who had been given the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* by Almighty Allãh.

1. While counting the miraclous powers that he possessed, Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) says:

> *"I will inform you of what you are eating and what you store in your houses..."* (3:48)

2. In reference to Prophet Yûsuf, we have the following verses:

> *"And thus does your Lord choose you and teaches you the interpretation of words."* (12:6 , 12:21)

> *"...And when they agreed to put him into the bottom of the pit, We revealed to him that (a time shall come when) you will inform them of this affair of theirs..."* (12:15)

> *"...I shall inform you two of its interpretation before comes to you (the food): this is from what my Lord has taught me..."* (12:37)

3. Prophet Sulaymãn were taught the language of the birds:

> *"And Sulaymãn...he said, 'O men! We have been taught the language of the birds."* (27:16)

4. According to the Qur'ãn, Allãh had bestowed *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* upon the Prophet of Islam as can be seen in the following verses:

> Referring to the events of the past, Allãh says, *"These are the news of the ghayb that We reveal unto you..."* (11:49)

> Refering to the story of Prophet Yûsuf, Allãh says: *"These are the news of the unseen (ghayb) that We reveal unto you..."* (12:102)

> Allãh informed the Prophet about the on-going war between the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sasanid Persian Empire: *"The Romans are vanquished in a nearby land; and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome (the Persians) within a few years..."* (30:1-4)

> On the conquest of Mecca at the hand of the Muslims, Allãh said, *"Certainly Allãh had shown to His Apostle the vision with truth: you shall most certainly enter the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), if Allãh pleases, in security..."* (48:27)

> The Prophet is also informed about the inner most thoughts of the hypocrites:

> *"...And they say in their own hearts, 'Why does not Allãh punish us for what we say?'..."* (58:8)

As you can see, these examples cover all aspects of *ghayb:* history of the past, events of the future, language of the birds, and also the intentions of other people. The Prophet is described as someone *"who was not niggardly of the ghayb,"* (81:24) he used to share the information with others.

Before we end this section, let me remind the readers that the knowledge of *ghayb* of a human being or an angel is not his own but is always and constantly dependent upon the will of Allãh. That is why the Messengers were instructed to say that they do not possess *'ilmu 'l-ghayb.* (6:50 ; 11:3) It is for the same reason that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was instructed to say:

> *"Had I knowledge of the ghayb, I would have acquired much good, and evil would not have touched me."* (7:188)

This is not a denial of having *'ilmu 'l-ghayb;* it is affirmation of the belief that whatever knowledge he has is according to the wish and pleasure of Almighty Allãh.[130]

4. 'Ilmu 'l-Ghayb of the Imams

Imam 'Ali was also blessed with the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* as attested by verse 13:43 discussed in the last chapter on *wilãyat*. It was on the basis of the "knowledge of the Book" that Imam 'Ali has the universal *wilãyat.* Moreover, according to Shí'a *ahãdíth,* Allãh had instructed the Prophet to convey whatever knowledge was given to him to 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib. After all, the Prophet "*was not niggardly of the ghayb.*" The other Imams, as successors of 'Ali, also had access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb*.[131] Shaykh al-Muzaffar explains the Shí'a position on this issue as follows:

> "We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration have reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely-given power. By this means the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time, and he understands by means of this Divinely-given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher. When he desires to know about some matter, it is reflected in his pure mind as if in a polished mirror. It is clear from the histories of their lives that, like the Prophet, the Imams were not trained or taught by anyone at all, not even in reading and writing, from their childhoods to the maturing of their minds. No author or teacher was seen to instruct one of them, but they were incomparable masters of knowledge, so that they never asked about any problem without being able to answer it immediately, and they never

said that they did not know. They never required time to consider a question before replying."[132]

Soon after the people accepted him as their leader, Imam 'Ali (a.s.) came to the mosque dressed in the turban and robe of the Prophet, and sat on the pulpit. Then he said: "O People, ask me before you lose me for this is the basket of knowledge, this is the breath of the Messenger of Allãh (s.a.w.), and this is what the Messenger of Allãh fed me. Therefore, ask me for I have the knowledge of the first ones and the last ones.

"By Allãh, if a cushion is set up for me so that I may sit on it, I shall give verdicts to the people of Tawrãt according to their Tawrãt until it will say, "Ali is true; he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allãh has revealed in me.' And I shall give verdicts to the people of the Injíl according to their Injíl until it will say, "Ali is true; he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allãh has revealed in me.' And I shall give verdicts to the people of the Qur'ãn according to their Qur'ãn until it will say, "Ali is true, he has not lied. He has given you the verdict according to what Allãh has revealed in me.'

"You read the Book (i.e., the Qur'ãn) at night as well as day; so is there anyone among you who knows what was revealed in it? If it had not been for a verse in the Book of Allãh, I would have informed you of what has happened (in the past), what will happen, and what shall happen until the Day of Resurrection. And that is the verse: *'Allãh erases and confirms what He wishes, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.'* [Ra'd 39]..."[133] This last passage is significant; in it, Imam 'Ali claims to have the access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* but also acknowledges that it is totally dependent upon the will of Almighty Allãh.

Here we shall just quote one or two examples from the life of Imam 'Ali (a.s.). Jundab bin 'Abdullãh al-Azdi narrates the following: I took part with 'Ali in the battles of Jamal and Siffín. I never had any doubts about fighting against those who fought him until I took part in the battle of Naharwãn (against the Kharijites). Then doubts came to me about fighting against these people. I said, "It is our reciters of the Qur'ãn and our choice men whom we are killing. This matter is dreadful."

In the morning I went for a walk (taking) a vessel of water with me, until I left the lines (of the army). Then I fixed my spear in the ground, fitted my shield on it and shaded myself from the sun. While I was sitting, Amíru 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali (a.s.) came along. He said to me, "O' Brother from (the tribe of) al-Azd, do you have water for ritual purification with you?"

"Yes," I answered and I gave him the vessel.

He went aside so that I could not see him. Then he came back after he had purified himself. He sat down in the shade of the spear. Suddenly a horseman appeared asking for him. I said, "O' Amiru 'l-Mu'minin, there is a horseman who wants you."

"Make a sign to him (to come here)," he told me.

I made a sign and he came. He said, "O' Amiru 'l-Mu'minin, the people (i.e., the Kharijites) have crossed the river."

"No," he retorted, "they have not crossed."

"Yes, by God, they have crossed." the man insisted.

"No," he retorted, "they have not crossed."

Then another man came. He said, "O' Amiru 'l-Mu'minin, the people have crossed."

"No," he replied, "they have not crossed."

"By God," the man said, "I did not come to you until I saw the standards and the baggage on that side."

"By God," he declared, "they have not done so. (What you want) is to kill them and shed their blood."

Then he rose and I rose with him. I said to myself, "Praise be to God, who has given me insight into this man and enabled me to recognize his affair. He is one of the two men: he is either a bold liar or he has an evidence (for his authority) from his Lord and a covenant from his Prophet. O God, I give You a solemn undertaking which You can ask me about on the Day of Resurrection. If I find that the people have crossed, I will be the first to fight against him, the first to thrust my spear into his eye. If the people have not crossed, then I will go forth with him and fight alongside him."

We returned to the lines (of the army) and we found that the standards and baggages were as they had been (before).

Then 'Ali took me by the scruff of the neck and pushed me. Then he said, "O' Brother of (the tribe of) al-Azd, has the matter become clear to you?"

"Yes, Amiru 'l-Mu'minin." I replied.

"Your business is with your enemy," he said.

I killed one man from the Kharijites and then I killed another. I and another of them were exchanging blows. I struck him and he struck me. We both fell together. My comrades carried me back. By the time I recovered consciousness, there were none of the Kharijites left.

After quoting this incident, Shaykh al-Mufid makes the following comment: "In it, 'Ali provides information about the unseen, gives clear evidence of his knowledge of the inner conscience (of man) and his knowledge of what is in men's souls. The evidence in it is outstanding which could not be equalled by evidence of a similar nature in terms of the greatness of the miracle and its clear proof." [134]

Now I would like to quote another example from the forthcoming book of my father where he has also discussed the issue of prophetic foresight. He writes:

"There are numerous, well-documented prophecies of the Prophet and 'Ali which were fulfilled later...An important historical event is referred to in Sermon 128 in *Nahju 'l-Balagha*. Sayyid Razi gives this sermon the caption 'From the Sermon describing the attributes of the Turks.' He quotes portions describing fierce invaders, their features, their clothes, the invincibility and their killing of multitudes. Now Sayyid Razi died in 406/1016, two hundred and forty-two years before the fall of Baghdad in 1258. Ibn Abil Hadid, who wrote the *Sharh* (commentary of *Nahju 'l-Balagha*) died seventeen years before the fall, he identifies the invaders with the Mongol hordes who had in his days already conquered Khorasan, Iran and Syria. He describes the havoc they created in the neighbouring countries up to 643/1245. He says:

> "'And know that this prophecy of the unseen by 'Ali (a.s.), we have seen it by our own eyes and it has happened in our time. And the people, since the early days of Islam, were waiting for its fulfillment, until the firm decree (of Allãh) made it appear in our day.'

"There are no clear details in his version of the sermon of who the conquered were. But this same sermon in its full form was in the hands of the learned Shí'a and had been since 'Ali's day.

"'Allama al-Hilli was born eight years before the fall of Baghdad to Hulagu Khan. His father, Sadídu 'd-Din Yusuf al-Hilli was the most learned man of his time in *fiqh,* principle of jurisprudence and theology. Referring to the prophecies of future events by 'Ali, 'Allama writes:

> And among them is his prophecy of the foundation of Baghdad and the

Kingdom of the 'Abbasids and their circumstance in which the Mongols shall take away the kingdom from them. My father has narrated it, and that [prophecy] was the reason for the citizens of Kufa, Hilla and the two sacred cities [Karbala and Najaf] being saved from the massacre.

When Hulagu reached Baghdad, and before he conquered it, the majority of the people of Hilla fled away to the deserts, except a few of them. Among those who remained was my father (may Allãh have mercy on him), Sayyid Majdu 'd-Din bin Tãwus, and the faqih, Ibn Abi 'l-'Izz. They decided to write to the sultan [Hulagu] that they accepted his rule and were under the Il Khanid authority. They sent the letter with a Persian man. Hulagu sent a firman (order) with two person, Nikalah and 'Ala'uddin, saying, 'If your hearts are as your letter shows, then come to us.' The two officers came [and conveyed Hulagu's message]. However, the others [who had signed the letter] were afraid to go as they did not know what the result would be. Therefore, my father (may Allãh have mercy on him) asked the officers, 'Would it be enough if I alone come there?' They said, 'Yes.' Therefore, he went with them.

When my father came before the Sultan (and it was before Baghdad was conquered and the caliph killed), he asked my father, 'How is it that you ventured upon writing to me and coming to my court even before you knew how the matter between me and your king would be decided? How can you be sure; perhaps he would make peace with me and I would go away?'

My father (may Allãh have mercy upon him) said, 'We took that step because we have been told of the prophecy of Amiru 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali ibn Abi Tãlib (a.s.) that he said in his Sermon of Zawrã':

> '...And what would make you know what Zawrã' is? A land of deep-rooted splendour. Strong buildings will be built in it and its inhabitants will increase in number; and there shall be therein servants and treasurers.
>
> The children of 'Abbãs will make it their dwelling place and a showplace for their vanities; it shall be their house of amusement and sport; there shall be in it overpowering oppression, frightful fear, debauched leaders, sinful rulers, and embezzling ministers; these shall be served by the natives of Fars and Rum. They shall not perform any good even after knowing it and shall not leave any evil even after knowng it. Their males shall satisfy their lust with males, and the females with females.
>
> Then there shall be the overwhelming grief, long weeping and

destruction, and crying for the inhabitants of Zawrã' from the assault of the Turks. And they are a people of small eyes, their faces like hammered shields, their clothes are iron, they are hairless, beardless. There will lead them a king who will come from whence their (the 'Abbasids') kingdom had begun. He will be of a very loud voice, powerful authority and high courage; he will not pass by a town but that he will conquer it, and no standard will be raised against him but that he will put it down. Woe unto him who would become his enemy, he shall remain like it until he is victorous.'

After quoting the sermon, my father said, 'As these qualities had long been described to us and we found the very qualities in you, we put our hope in you and came towards you.'

Thereupon the Sultan was satisfied and he wrote for them (i.e., the citizens of the four towns) a firman, in the name of my father (may Allãh have mercy upon him) giving tranquility to the hearts of the people of Hilla and the nearby towns.

"Clearly the leading Shi'a had the Sermon in a form which gave details of who the vanquished were-the 'Abbasids. It is inconceivable that 'Ali would give such detail of the victor without any reference to the vanquished. They believed so completely in its authenticity that they took such an irreversible step as to correspond with and go in person to the court of Hulagu. As for Sayyid Razi, one can understand his omission of details about the conquered. He did not omit them because of lack of high literary merit but because he lived in Baghdad under the very nose of those who were to be so signally vanquished, the 'Abbasid Caliphs."[135]

Jundab's personal example during the lifetime of Imam 'Ali and al-Hilli's example of the seventh Islamic century, clearly prove that the Imams had access to *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* by the blessing of Almighty Allãh, and that this belief is not "certain extravagant claims made for them by their fanatical associates."[136] In the words of Shaykh al-Mufid, "(The evidence for) this kind (of miracle) by Amíru 'l-Mu'minín ['Ali] is such that it can only be denied through stupidity, ignorance, slander and obstinacy."[137]

5. 'Ilmu 'l-Ghayb & Personal Life

So why did not the Prophet or the Imams use the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* to avert tragedies in their personal lives? This is a very commonly asked question in regard to the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb.* I always use an example I had seen in my childhood in East Africa. I remember seeing vehicles assigned to government officials with the sign "For Official Use Only" clearly visible on them. The *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* given to the prophets and

Imams is just like that: "For Official Use Only," it is not for use in their personal lives.

Recently, in response to a question from a Philippinese Shí'a, my father wrote: "Allah (s.w.t.) had given fore-knowledge of many future events to the Prophet and the Imams. But at the same time they were strictly ordered not to use that knowledge in their dealings with the people. In other words, they were to deal with the people as if they did not know what was going to happen in the future. They had to live with the people on the level of the common people. They were not to use their super-natural knowledge or power for their own benefit or for averting any harm from themselves. (In fact, it was a very tough test for them to know that a certain man or woman would harm them or their children and then behave with him/her in the normal way.) That is why 'Ali (a.s.) did not punish or imprison Ibn Muljim, although he knew that the latter would assassinate him."[138]

Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Ja'fari explains, "The Prophets and the Imams, it should be well observed, share with the rest of humanity the means for obtaining knowledge which Allãh has given: the senses, the intellect, etc. They also possess a special power or means which other people do not have.

"In the carrying out of the commands of Allãh's *sharí'ah* in which all have a responsibility, and likewise in ordinary behaviour, the Prophets and the Imams only make use of the first way of knowing, the commonly available means: the second means is only made use of by them in duties and works which are connected with their positions of prophethood and Imamate. Thus in matters like knowing the beginning of the month, passing judgement, finding out if something is unclean or pure, etc., they make use of the means, such as the sighting of the moon, and so forth, which everyone else employs.

"Also the knowledge that Prophets or Imams have concerning, for example, the time of their death, cannot be the basis for action for them. What they volitionally do must be determined by the means available to everyone. Such knowledge thus has a spiritual aspect to it related to the Encounter with Allãh, and the reason for it must be sought on this level, but it is not for the purpose of influencing and controlling events on the level of ordinary understanding."[139]

The same applies to the universal *wilãyat:* the Prophet or the Imams do not use it for their personal interest, it is only used for proving the truth of the faith.

6. The Concept of "al-Qur'ãn an-Nãtiq"

"Al-Qur'ãn an-nãtiq" means the "speaking Qur'ãn." This is a famous title given to the Shí'a Imams to describe their proximity to the Qur'ãn; they are the custodians of the

Qur'ãnic message and its interpretation; they are the embodiment of the Qur'ãnic values and its ideals. This concept is based on the various sayings of the Prophet in which the Qur'ãn and the Ahlul Bayt are shown to never separate from one another.

The famous hadíth of *thaqalayn* says:

> "I am leaving two precious things behind among you: the Book of Allãh and my Ahlul Bayt. The two shall not separate from one another until they come to me at the fountain of Kawthar (on the Day of Resurrection)."[140]

In another hadíth, Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, quotes him as follows:

> "'Ali is with the Qur'ãn and the Qur'ãn is with 'Ali; they shall never separate from one another until they reach to me at the Fountain (on the day of Resurrection)."[141]

Abu Sa'íd al-Khudari reports that one day we were sitting waiting for the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) to come out. He came to us while we saw that the strap of his shoe was broken; he gave it to 'Ali to repair. Then he said,

> "One of you will wage war for the interpretation *(ta'wíl)* of the Qur'ãn just as I waged war for its revelation *(tanzíl).*"

Abu Bakr said, "Am I the one?" The Prophet said, "No." Then 'Umar said, "Am I the one?" The Prophet said, "No, but the one who is repairing the shoe."[142]

Imam 'Ali himself said, "Ask me before you lose me, for by the One who split the grain and created the soul, if you ask me as to which verse was revealed at night time or at day time, whether it is of Meccan or Medinite [era], during journey (of the Prophet) or while in Medina, whether it is abrogator or abrogated, whether it is clear or allegorical, and whether you need its interpretation or context of its revelation-I shall inform you about it."[143]

It is based on these facts supported by the Sunni sources that the Shí'as use the title *"al-Qur'ãnu 'n-Nãtiq"* for their Imams. As we saw above, Imam 'Ali himself claims to have the true and inner meanings of the Qur'ãnic verses. This claim and belief has been there from the earliest days of Shí'ism. So it is incorrect to place the beginning of this concept in the latter period by saying that "the belief that the Imams were the 'speaking (al-natiq) Qur'ãn,' who knew the esoteric interpretation of the Book, most probably began during al-Bãqir's time."[144]

* * *

[128] For an excellent discussion on the Qur'ãnic verses on 'ilmu 'l-ghayb and their relevant ahãdíth, see Ahmad Mutahhari and Ghulãm Razã Kardãn, 'Ilm-e Payãmbar wa Imãm dar Qur'ãn, Qum: Dar Rah-e Haq, 1366 (solar) A.H.

[129] At-Tabãtabã'í, al-Mizãn, vol. 20, p. 131-132.

[130] For a precise and clear picture on the knowledge of God (which is absolute and unchanging, and is described as "al-lawh al-mahfûz - the protected tablet") vis-à-vis the knowledge of chosen human beings and angels (which is not necessarily absolute, and is described as "lawhu 'l-mahw wa 'l-ithbãt -the tablet that can be erased and re-written"), see S. Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, The Justice of God, p. 21-26. The book clearly explains that badã' (change) does not occur in the knowledge of God, it can only occur in the knowledge of humans and angels.

[131] Al-Majlisi, Bihãru 'l-Anwãr, vol. 26, chapters 1, 3, and 5 as quoted in Rizvi, The Justice of God, p. 21-26.

[132] Al-Muzaffar, M.R., The Faith of Shí'a Islam, p. 33-34.

[133] Al-Mufid, al-Ikhtisãs, p. 235; a shorter version of this narration may also be seen in al-Irshãd, p. 34 (in English, p. 21). For other references on this claim of Imam 'Ali that "Ask me before you lose me," see al-Amini, al-Ghadír, vol. 6, p. 193-194; vol. 7, p. 107-108.

[134] Al-Mufid, al-Irshãd, p. 317-319; in its English translation, see p. 239-240. This narration can also be seen in the following Sunni sources: Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanzu 'l-'Ummãl, vol. 11, p. 289 quoted from at-Tabarãni's al-Wasít; Ibn Abi 'l-Hadíd, Sharh Nahji 'l-Balãgha, vol. 2, p. 271.

[135] The forthcoming book of 'Allama Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi on Shi'a faith and history. He cites al-Hilli's Kashfu 'l-Yaqín, p. 28 as the source for the narration.

[136] Abdulaziz Sachedina writes about the evolution of Imamate as follows: "The Imams were now believed to possess divine knowledge which enabled them to predict future events...The highly speculative aspects of the doctrine of the Imamate should be attributed to the circumstances in which the Imams manifested political quietism but did not object to certain extravagant claims made for them by their fanatical associates. These claims included the possession of esoteric knowledge inherited through designation by the Imam." (Islamic Messianism, p. 18-19)

[137] Al-Mufid, al-Irshãd, p. 314; in English, see p. 236.

[138] In the forthcoming Your Questions Answered, vol. 8.

[139] See the explanatory note of Shaykh Muhammad Ridha al-Ja'fari in al-Kulayni, al-Kãfi (Arabic with English translation), vol. 1, Part Two, Book 4 (iii) p. 259. Sayyid Muhammad Ridha al-Jalãli has extensively dealth with this question and its responses by the Imams (a.s.) themselves and the Shí'a 'ulamã' of the last ten centuries. See "'Ilmu 'l-Aimma bi 'l-Ghayb wa 'l-I'tirãdh 'alayhi bi 'l-Ilqãi ila 't-tuhlika wa 'l-ijãbãt 'anhu 'ibaru 't-ta'ríkh," Turãthunã, no. 37 (Shawwãl, 1414) p. 7-107.

[140] At-Tirmidhi, Sahíh, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.) p. 328-329, hadíth # 3874, 3876; as-Suyûti, ad-Durru 'l-Manthûr, vol. 6, p. 7, 306; Ibnu 'l-Maghãzili ash-Shãfi'í, Manãqib 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib, p. 234, hadíth # 281.

[141] Al-Hãkim, al-Mustakrak 'ala 's-Sahíhayn, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, n.d.) p. 124; al-Khuwarazmi, al-Manãqib, p. 110; Majma'u 'z-Zawã'id, vol. 9, p. 134 as-Suyûti, Ta'ríkhu 'l-Khulafã', p. 173.

[142] An-Nasã'í, Khasã'isu Amíri 'l-Mu'minín 'Ali bin Abi Tãlib, p. 134; Muhibbu 'd-Dín at-Tabari, Dhakhã'iru 'l-'Uqba, p. 139.

[143] Al-Mufid, al-Ikhtisãs, p. 236.

[144] Abdulaziz Sachedina, Islamic Messianism, p. 15.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

The beginning of Islam is not separate from the beginning of Shí'ism; it started with the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad al-Mustafa (s.a.w.), and has been preserved in its origin form by the Imams of Ahlul Bayt (a.s.).

The Prophet presented the message of Islam in the *da'wat dhu 'l-'ashíra* and also introduced 'Ali as "my brother, my successor, and my caliph." And then just a few months before his death, in the biggest gathering of his life, at Ghadír Khumm, the Prophet clearly appointed 'Ali as the *mawla* (the master, the leader) of the *ummah.* In between the *da'wat* and Ghadír Khumm, the Prophet introduced 'Ali to the people in various occasions. The appointment of 'Ali for imãmat and khilãfat was explicit and clear.

'Ali and the Imams from among his descendants are *the* Ahlul Bayt in the Qur'ãnic term. Loving and honouring them is an Islamic duty of all Muslims. The Ahlul Bayt have been vested by Allãh with the *wilãyat* in the broadest sense of the word, and that also includes the *'ilmu 'l-ghayb.*

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